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A
DEFENCE
OF
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,
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DEFENCE

OF

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND



A
DEFENCE
OF
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,
IN A SERIES OF
DISCOURSES,

PREACH'D

AT OLDSWINFORD, IN WORCESTERSHIRE;

ON EPHESIANS 5, 27 :

BY THE REV. ROBERT FOLEY, M. A.

OF ORIEL COLLEGE OXFORD, *W*
AND RECTOR OF THE SAID PARISH.

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1795.

1790

THE

THE END OF THE

DISCOURSES

AT CLONMEL, IN WEXFORDSHIRE



TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

RICHARD HURD, D. D.

LORD BISHOP OF WORCESTER;

THESE

DISCOURSES,

PUBLISH'D

AT THE REQUEST OF SEVERAL OF THEIR HEARERS;

ARE

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY

HIS LORDSHIP'S MOST DUTIFUL

SON AND SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.



SERMON I.

PREACHED ON ADVENT SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1794.

EPHESIANS, C. 5. PART OF V. 27.

A GLORIOUS CHURCH, NOT HAVING SPOT, OR WRINKLE,
OR ANY SUCH THING.

ON this day, Advent Sunday, commences the Ecclesiastical Year, according to the computation of the Church of England. By referring to your Prayer-books you will see that the series of Collects, Epistles, and Gospels for each Sunday and Holyday through the year, as also that of Proper Lessons for the same, each begin their course, and as it were start from this day. Herein it is observable that the Church differs from every other account of time whatsoever. And an ingenious reason has been assign'd for this very particular deviation. As

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SERMON I.

in the Civil year the times are naturally measur'd by the course of the Sun in the firmament, whose diurnal rotation, to speak popularly, metes out day and night to each quarter of the globe, while his annual course as regularly furnishes each with the grateful vicissitudes of seasons, Summer, and Winter, Spring and Autumn: so the Church, in her distribution of the Year, is guided by the Sun of Righteousness, Christ Jesus; previous to the celebration of whose Nativity, which she commemorates at Christmas, she has assign'd four preparatory weeks to pave the way for the observation of that solemn Festival, and as harbingers to usher it in with becoming dignity.

Our Religion is the Religion of Christ; our faith is in Christ, our hope is in Christ, our salvation is through Christ. But who is Christ? and how hath He atchieved salvation for his faithful servants? He is the second Person in the ever-blessed and glorious Trinity; the only-begotten Son of God, and Himself God, eternal, and uncreate. And He purchased our salvation by dying for our sins, and by rising again for our justification. But He could not have died, unless He had been Man, and in order to become Man, that the Word might be made Flesh,
and

and take human nature upon Him, it was necessary that He should be born in the world. He was so; and from that auspicious day whereon He quitted the Virgins womb, wherein He had been imprisoned during the appointed months, from that blessed day of glory to God on high, and of peace on earth, and good will to men, do we date the first origin of Christianity. During the long-protracted space of four thousand years from the creation and fall of man, the whole business of the Patriarchs, of the Law, and of the Prophets, was to typify and foretell this great and momentous event: with the utmost propriety therefore has the Church set apart the space of four weeks, to prepare our minds for it's due celebration.

This day therefore, thus distinguish'd, appears to me a proper time for entering upon a plan which I have long had in contemplation; which is, to offer to your serious consideration a defence and vindication of that most excellent and truly primitive Church, whereof we all are happily members, and of which Myself, however unworthy, have the honour to be a Minister, from the invidious cavils and groundless objections of those who have evil will at this our Sion; who in this age and nation,

and particularly in this neighbourhood, are restless in their opposition thereunto, and cease not their endeavours to put men out of conceit with it's doctrines and services, and I must add, to turn them aside from the truth, as it is in Jesus. Sincerely and cordially as I feel myself from conviction attach'd to the Church of England, I could wish to inculcate a similar respect and reverence thereunto upon those who are committed to my charge. I could wish that every one, even the most unlearned and ignorant among my flock, might be enabl'd to comply with the Apostle's injunction, of giving to every one that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them; that each might have a ready reply both to the serious attacks on our faith and doctrine, and to the petulant cavils at our services and ceremonies. To this subject then I intend to dedicate a series of discourses, to be continued at intervals, as health and leisure shall give me opportunity; and which I purpose to discriminate by prefixing to each the same text.

To these I mean the present discourse as merely introductory; and herein I shall first enter a little more largely into the reasons which have induc'd me to adopt this plan; secondly, I shall give you a
a brief

a brief explanation of the Text, shewing you both its connection with the Context, and also how I mean to apply it; and lastly shall sketch out to you the method which strikes me as most proper to be pursued in the farther prosecution of these discourses. First then for my reasons for adopting this plan.

Now here it might be deem'd sufficient to allege these two general motives; first, that as a Minister of the Establishment it is my duty to defend the Church, whose bread I eat; and secondly, that as your Pastor it is my duty to impart to you all things whatsoever that I am myself fully convinc'd are true, and also tend to your edification. But then it may be objected, that if a Christian Minister take care to instruct his flock in the genuine doctrines of the Gospel, and the nature of their practical duty, pressing upon them a blameless life, with a strict adherence to the rules which Christ hath laid down for their behaviour toward God, their neighbour, and themselves; it were better for him to keep clear of whatever may tend to controversy; and of course to avoid meddling with those nicer shades of distinction which divide and discriminate the various sects and persuasions of

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Christians,

Christians, and concerning which mankind will never be brought to think alike. I acknowledge the force of the objection, and in general have acted under it's conviction. But as in war a skilful Commander will ever adapt his conduct to that of the enemy, varying his modes of attack and defence according to the circumstances of time and place, and the motions and relative situations of the foe; just so is the case of the Christian Warrior. If the adversary make an open assault, he must be resisted with courage; if he proceed covertly by sap, he must be counteracted with address. Should the wolf overleap the fold, he must be boldly withstood; should he prowl about in sheep's clothing, the shepherd must strip him of his borrow'd skin. At present, the times loudly call upon the friends of the Church of England for the most vigilant circumspection, and the most active defence: the conduct of the Sectaries provokes us to it. Not content with the liberal toleration allow'd them by the laws, they disdain to stop short of Profelytism. In this populous district of ours, and the case is the same in many others, the smallness and inconvenience of our place of worship, with it's distance from some thickly inhabited parts of the Parish, are circumstances much in their favour. For these a remedy will I trust be one day provided; and

and that probably at no very great distance of time. In the mean while the Dissenters not only insinuate privately to individuals, but publish openly to the world their objections to the Establishment. Nor is it a matter of small consequence to what congregation you join yourselves. However slightly, and even contemptuously, some of their champions may have affected to treat the notion of an Alliance between Church and State, yet does the united voice of history and experience concur in proving, that they have ever flourish'd and declin'd together. Let us but advert to the now-existing posture of affairs. While the Nation is straining every nerve to the utmost stretch in opposition to the wanton and unprovok'd attacks of the most ferocious, blood-thirsty, and unprincipl'd Banditti that ever ravag'd the face of the earth; while, in the common cause of all European Kings and Governments, we have seen ourselves first feebly supported; and then deserted and abandon'd, if not betray'd, by almost every Ally; while Peace may possibly be necessary to our safety, however fatal to our honour: what in the mean time do we see going on at home? a set of Societies, assembling together under specious titles, and upon plausible pretences; acting in open and avow'd defiance to the Laws and the Constitution, and disseminating

feminating their poisonous doctrines with unremit-
ted vigilance and activity through every corner of
the land. And when some of the ringleaders have
been brought to their Trials, though the voice of
their country have acquitted them of the actual
crime of Treason, yet not a doubt remains in the
breast of every candid man of their having ap-
proach'd the very verge of Treason; and however
their overt acts may have steer'd clear of the penal-
ties of the Law, yet are their intentions sufficiently
apparent. And among all the numerous members
of these so justly obnoxious Societies, of whatever
description or rank in life, I dare take upon me to
assert, there can not be found one single true, genu-
ine, and sincere member of the Church of England.
There is, there can be, no fellowship between
Christ and Belial.

But enough has been said in explanation of my
reasons, and enough I trust to convince you not only
of the propriety, but also of the expediency of the
design I have undertaken. I shall therefore now pro-
ceed in the second place to a brief elucidation of the
Text and Context. Saint Paul in this Chapter is giv-
ing the Ephesians some instructions concerning re-
lative duties; and touching upon the reciprocal ob-
ligations

ligations of the conjugal state, he commands husbands to love their wives, even as Christ also loved the Church. In the sacred language of the New Testament the appellation of the wife or spouse of Christ is commonly given to the Christian Church. Now the word, Church, has three different appropriate senses. In its most ordinary and simple meaning it denotes the edifice wherein we meet together for the purposes of public prayer, preaching, and the administration of the Sacraments, with other solemn ordinances of our holy Religion; and wherein we are now assembled. Secondly, it denotes the members of Christ, or the aggregate body of Christian people, wheresoever dispers'd over the surface of the globe: and thirdly it is used to signify a particular Christian Community, who agree together in the same doctrine and discipline, and in the use of the same rites and ordinances; in which sense we speak of the Greek Church, the Church of Rome, the Church of England, and so forth. Now it is most clearly in the second sense that the word is here used by the Apostle, when he says of the Church, that Christ gave himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such

such thing ; but that it should be holy, and without blemish. But in the application of these words, I must confine the term to it's third and more limited sense : my design being to shew you, that the Church of England is in fact possess'd of those qualifications which Saint Paul declares to be characteristic of the Church of Christ in the more extended sense ; or that it is, as far as the imperfections of every merely human institution will admit, a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. It may be proper to observe here that the whole expression is figurative ; the allusion seeming to be to a garment, probably the Wedding-garment ; which being new and clean for the occasion, would of course be free from spot or wrinkle.

Thus much may suffice to elucidate the Text, and to shew you in what manner I mean to apply it. All that seems farther necessary at present is, to sketch out to you the order I mean to pursue in the discourses that are to follow. First then it may be proper to begin with a succinct historical account of our National Church ; shewing you those corruptions of Popery which it so laudably rejected, and marking distinctly the point whereat it stop'd ; while some other Reformers, possess'd of more zeal
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than knowledge, proceeded to much greater lengths. This will probably take up two Sermons; when the way being thus clear'd, my next object will be that fundamental doctrine, the very groundwork of Christianity, which the Dissenters of this day almost universally reject, the Divinity of Christ; and while on this subject, I shall take occasion to vindicate our Church from the outcry rais'd against her for retaining what is usually call'd the Athanasian Creed. This topic discuss'd, which I judge will take up three discourses, what then remains will be to consider and refute the various cavils and objections so industriously and so maliciously thrown out against our Church, with its ceremonies, liturgy, and several Offices, contain'd in, and prescrib'd by the book of Common Prayer, as set forth by authority. This part of my plan I imagine may require to be branch'd out into about four Sermons more; and I hope I may venture to promise not to trespass upon your time to any very considerable length in any one single discourse. I will conclude the present with my hearty prayer to the Almighty, not only that the result of the whole may be your thorough conviction, that the Church of England is a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but also that He may grant you
grace

grace to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, and of the Church whereto you belong: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascrib'd all honour and glory, for ever and ever.

AMEN.

SERMON

SERMON II.

PREACH'D ON SUNDAY DECEMBER 14, 1794.

HAVING in my first Sermon on these words sketch'd out to you the method I propos'd to pursue in my following discourses on the subject, I shall now without any further introduction enter upon the first part of my plan; which is, to give you a succinct historical account of our national Church; shewing you those corruptions of Popery which it so laudably rejected, and also pointing out where it stooped: while other Reformers, possess'd of more zeal than knowledge, went much greater lengths.

When our blessed Saviour had compleatly fulfilled the important end of his Incarnation, and finished the work for which his Father sent Him
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into the world; when after a life wholly spent in doing good, and teaching and preaching the word of God, He at last died on the cross for our sins, and rose again from the grave for our justification; his last parting words to his disciples, previous to his ascension into heaven, to the bosom of his Father, which for our sakes He had so graciously quitted for a season; his last words, as recorded by the holy Evangelist Saint Matthew, were these: All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

At that period of time the whole world had long lost the knowledge of the one true God, and was overspread with heathenism and idolatry; save only the single nation of the Jews, the posterity of faithful Abraham, and of whom Christ came in the flesh. To these were the divine oracles committed, and to these was the Mosaic dispensation confin'd. But the Messiah was to found an universal Religion, to comprehend the whole race of mankind; not partial to the descendants of Abraham, but general for
all

all the sons of Adam. And this new Religion was not only to abolish heathenism and idolatry, but also to supersede the Law of Moses; which had now fulfilled its office of a school-master, to bring it's followers to Christ. Jesus then, having while on earth laid the foundation of this new religion, commits to his disciples, in the words above recited from Saint Matthew, the care of compleating the edifice. In obedience then to this charge, they went forth, as Saint Mark takes care to inform us, and preached every where; the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. So wonderful, I may say so miraculous a revolution requir'd miraculous aids; and the Apostles were thereby enabl'd in a very short time to convert astonishing multitudes to the Faith. But large as was the harvest, the labourers were few. In this case they had been previously instructed by their Master to pray to the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth more labourers into the harvest. They did so; and accordingly as the number of converts increas'd they form'd them into Societies, or Communities, and plac'd each congregation under the care of some approv'd Disciple, whom they ordain'd to the Ministry by laying on of hands, and thereby conferring the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Now

Now these primitive Ministers, thus ordained and constituted by the Apostles, were at first indiscriminately nam'd either Bishops, which literally signifies Overseers; or Presbyters, the literal meaning of which word is Elders; a title partly expressive of Age, and partly of Authority. We read also in the sixth Chapter of the Acts, of another inferior Order appointed by the Apostles, distinguish'd by the name of Deacons; whose business was to superintend what is there call'd the daily ministration; or the distribution of the alms of the more opulent Christians among the widows, and such as were destitute of daily bread. But as the word of God grew mightily and prevailed, whole nations by degrees, and at last the mighty Roman Empire, then mistress of the world, embracing the faith, and professing Christianity; consequently the Church, thus enlarg'd, found it expedient to adapt it's mode of internal government to that which then took place in civil society. Accordingly we find an ecclesiastical Hierarchy subsisting at a very early period: smaller districts, similar to our modern Parishes, being assign'd to the care of particular Ministers under the appellation of Presbyters, or Priests, assisted where necessary by one or more Deacons; a number of these united forming a

Diocese

Diocese under the government of a superior Minister, dignified by the title of Bishop : and sometimes the Bishops of a whole province or kingdom acknowledging the paramount authority of One, call'd from his pre-eminence, Archbishop; and from his residence in the principal city, or Metropolis, Metropolitan.

That in the Christian Church, during it's early days of primitive and unadulterated purity, some such subordination and government was generally, if not universally establish'd, we are furnish'd with uncontrovertible proof from genuine and authentic history. But alas! these days of it's purity were of short duration. The miraculous powers bestow'd by Christ on his Apostles, and continued to their immediate successors, were soon withdrawn; and the Church, now past it's infancy, and advancing with hasty strides to the full vigour of maturity, was left to itself to make it's way in the world, without any farther supernatural assistances. Then did human pride and human passions quickly deface the fairest system the world had ever beheld: and that to such a degree, that though long ago reveal'd by the Prophetic Spirit both under the Old and New Dispensation, yet mankind were never able to comprehend the meaning of those Prophecies, till they

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beheld

beheld them fatally verified by the event. It is not my design here to trace minutely the origin and progress of the Papal usurpations and corruptions; suffice it to say, that the Bishops of Rome, merely from the circumstance of local situation, as residing in that grand Capital of the Empire, began very soon to harbour views of ambition; claiming to themselves not only a pre-eminence over all other Bishops, but farther arrogating such a supremacy in Spirituals, as the Roman Emperors exercis'd in Temporals. When that Empire was weaken'd by the memorable division into the Eastern and Western, and the Imperial residence remov'd from Rome to Constantinople; then did the Bishops of the latter City maintain a violent struggle with those of the former for this assum'd Supremacy; to which both had an equal Right, that is in fact no Right at all. But when afterwards the Northern Barbarians totally destroy'd the Western Empire, and Rome, from being Mistress of the world, became subject to the dominion of those fierce invaders; then was the foundation laid of that stupendous usurpation which soon spread over all Europe, and involv'd both the minds and bodies of men in compleat subjugation and absolute slavery to a new Antichristian Power, most strangely and incongruously blending spiritual dominion with temporal. For these Conquerors

querors being ignorant and illiterate beyond conception, and having for the most part embrac'd Christianity either before, or soon after their conquests, Superstition and Bigotry follow'd close in the train of their victories, and soon gave ample scope to the ambition and avarice of the Roman Bishops. An attempt to point out the progressive steps and degrees of their successive encroachments would lead me to an unwarrantable length; and besides forms no part of my present plan, which is only to shew you what actually were the corruptions of the Church of Rome at the time when this Nation with some others separated from her Communion. These are necessary to be explain'd, in order to vindicate our Church from the charge brought against us by the Papists on one hand, for what they call a needless and unjustifiable separation; and by the Sectaries on the other hand, for what they call a partial and imperfect separation: each of which is inconsistent with the character of the Church of Christ in the Text.

Let us then take a survey of the Romish or Popish Religion, as it was for some centuries profess'd by almost all Europe, and among the rest by our Ancestors in this Island; and is at this time adher'd to by several, and those very considerable Christian

Powers: for its tenets and principles are in fact the same now, as they were between two and three centuries ago; however some of the most absurd and unwarrantable of them may be palliated or gloss'd over by its more learned professors in these more enlighten'd times. In the first place then the Bishop of Rome, or as he is most usually stil'd, the Pope, not only claims a supremacy and absolute authority over all other Bishops, and over all spiritual persons whatsoever; but also over all temporal Monarchs, and their respective dominions. Pretending to be the immediate successor of Saint Peter, and the sole Vicar, or rather Viceroy of Christ upon earth, he has frequently both arrogated and exercis'd the power of creating and deposing Kings; of granting and taking away kingdoms; of absolving Subjects from their Allegiance, and authorizing them to murder their Sovereigns. To impress the idea of his transcendent superiority over earthly Kings, while the usual mode of ceremonial approach to their presence was with bended knee, and kissing hands, that to the Pope was by prostration of body, and kissing his feet: nay some of the mightiest Monarchs of Germany and France has he compell'd to the abject and humiliating degradation of holding the stirrup while he mounted his mule. Add to this his still more insolent claim to absolute infallibility; and
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in consequence thereof of garbelling and moulding the Christian Faith at pleasure; adding new articles or superseding old ones; and utterly invalidating the Scriptures of truth, partly by his own arbitrary interpretations, and partly by asserting the superiority of his own dictatorial mandates to the written word.

Having attain'd this summit of power and greatness, we find him sticking at no innovation, however unwarrantable, or even contrary to the word of God, as taught by Christ and his Apostles, in order to secure and strengthen this usurp'd power; to flatter his Ambition, and pamper his avarice. To this end a main object of his policy was to secure in his interest the whole body of the Clergy, who through the profound ignorance and abject superstition of the times were become by far the most numerous, powerful, and opulent body in every State of Christendom. Accordingly they were prohibited to marry; that being depriv'd of each tender domestic connection, their attachments to their Country might be thereby weaken'd; and depending entirely on the Pope for preferment they might be ever ready to side with him, in opposition to the civil Sovereignities of their respective Nations. To a deep laid scheme for the exaltation

of the authority and consequence of the Clergy may be trac'd the original of that monster of impiety and absurdity, so well known by the name of Transubstantiation. For Christ having instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist, both as a commemoration of his death, and as a fæderal rite for the conveyance of the benefits of that sacrifice once offer'd by Him on the cross for the sins of the whole world; the Church of Rome taught that their Mass, so they call the blessed Eucharist, was itself an actual perpetually-renew'd sacrifice; that on the pronouncing of the words of consecration by the Priest, the elements of bread and wine instantaneously chang'd their nature and substance, and became the real Body and Blood of Christ: thus blasphemously arrogating to the Clergy the power of creating God; to say nothing of the shocking absurdity of swallowing Him too. Still to keep the Laity at a farther distance, they denied them a participation of the Cup, in direct violation of the Redeemer's command, Drink ye All of this. They multiplied the Sacraments from two, the number instituted by Christ, to seven: they prohibited the Laity from reading the Scriptures: they enjoin'd all the Services of the Church to be perform'd in an unknown tongue: they authoriz'd the worship of Images, particularly Crucifixes, or representations of Christ's
Body

Body hanging on the cross, in pointed opposition to the second Commandment in the Decalogue: they enjoin'd the invocation of Saints and Martyrs, as Intercessors with God, in manifest contradiction to the sole intercession of Jesus, whom the Scriptures declare to be the One and only Mediator between God and Man: they ascrib'd to the Virgin Mary a worship and reverence superior to that which they allow'd to the Saviour of the world; praying her in their addressees to lay her authoritative maternal commands on her Son to grant their petitions. In consequence of the plenary power of forgiving sins, said to be vested in the Pope, a most shameful and scandalous traffic was instituted in dispensations and indulgences; so that for stipulated sums of money may be obtain'd not only permission to omit the practice of any moral or christian duty, but still farther, absolution and pardon for all sins already committed, or to be committed hereafter; without any the least regard to the Gospel-terms of Forgiveness, Repentance and Amendment. And not to tire and disgust you with a recital of the trumpery of Relics, and other such dregs of superstition, they invented a most singular and unscriptural doctrine, which they also exalted into an indispensable article of faith, respecting an imaginary Purgatory, or state of the dead; wherein the souls

of the deceas'd were to undergo the most horrible torments, till liberated by prayers and Masses; all of which had their set and stated prices.

Though I have endeavour'd to compress into as small a compass as possible this imperfect detail of the manifold and gross corruptions of Popery, yet has it swell'd to a length abundantly sufficient for a single discourse. It appears I imagine pretty plainly, that the Fabric of the Romish Church, however splendid and glorious in external appearance, had long ceas'd to be free from spot or wrinkle; and that it was high time to listen to the scriptural injunction, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins; that ye receive not of her plagues. Blessed be God, we of this nation have long since come out of her; but in what manner and to what degree, must be reserv'd for my next discourse on the same Text.

Now to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON III.

PREACH'D ON SUNDAY DECEMBER 21, 1794.

IN my last discourse on these words I laid before you a concise, but I hope tolerably accurate detail of the corruptions of Christianity which prevail'd in the Church of Rome. The first beginnings of these corruptions may be trac'd as far back as to those early times when the Roman Empire under Constantine, renouncing the idolatry of Paganism, embrac'd the religion of Christ. But their advances being progressive, and at first slow, though rapid afterwards, they did not attain to their full growth till somewhat more than five hundred years since; at which time such was their prevalence and universality, that true and genuine Christianity was not only defac'd and obscur'd, but well nigh extinguish'd: or to adopt the very significant metaphor of the

Text.

Text, the bridal garment was so spotted and wrinkled, that its original form and texture could no longer be discovered. Not but that as in the most corrupt *Æra* of the Jewish Religion God declar'd there were still left in Israel seven thousand faithful who had never bowed the knee to Baal; so in the times above describ'd there were always some few who saw and regretted the prevailing errors; and both in our own and in foreign countries some bold oppositions were made to them even in the darkest ages; but they were soon crush'd by the iron rod of power; and persecution drench'd the altar of Christ with the blood of his faithful witnesses.

In this deplorable state did all Christendom remain for about two Centuries; when a fortunate discovery was made, accidentally to outward appearance, but which, when we consider it's most extensive and beneficial consequences, we cannot scruple to attribute to the benign interposition of an all gracious Providence; I mean the invention of the Art of printing. Antecedently to this period such was the scarcity and dearth of Books, as to render them wholly unattainable by any but the great and opulent; and such was the barbarism, such were the manners of the times, that those great and opulent who alone were able to purchase,

chafe, neglected and despis'd them. Looking upon War as the only honourable employment, and alone worthy of the Gentleman, they gloried in their ignorance of Letters; and among Sovereign Princes and dignified Ecclesiastics, it was no ordinary attainment for a man to be capable of writing his own name. But no sooner had the art of printing, by multiplying copies, reduc'd the purchase of Books within the compass of moderate incomes, than learning began to revive; and a new and powerful light bursting upon the world, penetrated and by degrees dispers'd the black darkness of ignorance. Copies of the holy scripture now began to find their way into private hands; translations of them were made into the vernacular tongues of each nation: the Clergy studied them with avidity; numbers among the Laity, in spite of the Church's prohibitions, did the same: and the minds of men, gradually awaken'd from that torpid lethargy, or rather deep sleep, in which they had slumber'd for so many successive ages, were prepar'd to exercise their inherent and unalienable prerogative of thinking for themselves. In short, the Age both requir'd, and was prepar'd for,—a Reformation.

It was in Saxony, a province of the German Empire that this Reformation first took its rise. That
country

country had the honour of giving birth to the famous Martin Luther ; whose eyes were first open'd, and his zeal awaken'd, by the scandalous and barefac'd traffic of Indulgences. The detection of one abuse pav'd the way for that of others ; till at length he was led on to a denial of their fundamental tenet of the Pope's infallibility : a tenet which he shew'd to be equally repugnant to sound reason, and to genuine Christianity. In short, such was his ability, and such his intrepidity, that he compleatly tore off the mask which had so long conceal'd the horrors of this corrupt Communion, and expos'd it's deformity to open view. The progress of these new principles upon the Continent, the wars they occasion'd between their abettors and opposers, together with the states and kingdoms by which they were finally embrac'd or rejected ; all these are points foreign to the purpose of my plan ; which is confin'd to the establishment and settlement of our own church. I mean to shew you, that although this kingdom had not the honour of leading the way, and of appearing among the first Reformers ; yet such was her good sense and moderation, as justly to merit the praise of having constituted the most pure and truly primitive Church at this day existing in the world : a Church, approaching as near as any human

man institution can approach, to the scriptural description in the Text, of a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

At the period of time, when the Reformation preach'd by Luther was making a rapid progress in Germany, the Throne of this kingdom was fill'd by Henry the eighth, the most absolute and imperious of all the Tudor family: a race far more arbitrary than any of their ill-fated successors of the Stuart line. The principles of liberty, which at this day so eminently distinguish our glorious constitution, were then but feebly felt by the Subject; and the leading features in the character of the Monarch were pride, lust, caprice and cruelty. Bigoted to the religion of his Ancestors, and incens'd at what he deem'd the insolent boldness of a private Priest, in controverting the opinions of his superiors, he enter'd the lists as a champion against Luther; and compos'd, or at least publish'd a Treatise, in opposition to his doctrines: in grateful return for which work, the Pope conferr'd upon him that title, which still remains annex'd to the British Crown, of Defender of the Faith. Not long afterwards, in a quarrel with a succeeding Pope, for thwarting him in his favourite

rite scheme of a divorce from his lawful wife, in order to enable him to marry another woman, on whom he had fix'd his affections; he suddenly renounc'd the Papal Supremacy, and declar'd himself supreme Head of the Church, within his own dominions. He proceeded farther to suppress the numerous Religious Foundations throughout the Realm, seizing their temporalities into his own hands; and lavishly squandering many of them upon his Courtiers and Favourites. Still amid all this rapacious violence, he pertinaciously adher'd to most of the capital errors of Popery; and expecting his Subjects to conform implicitly to his own notions, he procur'd the enactment of the famous, or rather infamous Law of the six Articles; which awarded the punishment of death, to all who should dare to deny Transubstantiation, with some other equally false and pernicious doctrines: so that England now beheld both Protestants and Papists burning at the stake, the indiscriminate victims of the Tyrant's capricious rage; while the former could not in conscience subscribe to the six Articles, nor the latter consistently abjure the Pope's supremacy. The confin'd limits of my plan will barely suffer me to add, that when death had free'd the nation from this sanguinary yoke, the business of Reformation proceeded prosperously during

during the mild, but short reign of his son and successor Edward the sixth : but being still incomplete, suffer'd a rude shock, amounting to little less than utter destruction, under the bloody Mary : after whose decease it at length attain'd its perfect establishment under the benign auspices of the glorious Queen Elizabeth. This may be enough for the historical deduction ; my principal scope being to shew you not so much the means whereby it was perfected, or the progressive steps which led thereto ; as the grounds whereon it was establish'd, and the precise point, at which it stop'd.

It seems necessary to remark here, that during the time that interven'd between the first beginning of the Reformation in Germany, by the preaching of Luther, and it's reception here, and the final settlement of the Church of England, many able and learned Divines had distinguish'd themselves by their active opposition to the Church of Rome ; though differing from Luther, and from each other, on several points both of doctrine and discipline. One of the principal of these was the famous John Calvin ; of whose particular notions in divinity, and more especially respecting Church government, it were both tedious and superfluous
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to give you a detail. Suffice it to say, that such was his influence as to induce many states of Europe to adopt his tenets: in so much that among the Protestant Powers on the Continent the principal distinction at this day subsisting is that of Calvinists and Lutherans. Nay even in our own Island, the northern part call'd Scotland, which at the *Æra* of the Reformation was a distinct kingdom from England, chose to abide implicitly by the opinions of Calvin; and had their National Religion confirm'd to them inviolate at the Union of the two kingdoms, in the beginning of the present Century. And one of Calvin's favourite maxims being a kind of Republican Equality among Christian Ministers, consequently wherever his notions were adopted, the ancient Hierarchy, including a subordination of ranks and degrees in the Church, was rejected; the superior order of Bishops was abolish'd; and the care of spirituals being committed solely to Priests and Lay Elders, both of which are comprehended in the term Presbyter; thence originated the denomination of Presbyterian, or Low Church, in contradistinction to the Episcopal, or High Church.

It were easy to shew from history the concurrence of causes and events which operated upon our now fellow-subjects of Scotland to induce them
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to adopt the Presbyterian doctrine and discipline, nor would the detail be unentertaining; but it would lead me too far from my subject. Many too were the causes which in England led to a different System. The several circumstances which procrastinated the full settlement of the Reformation among us, the capriciousness of Henry, the Minority and early death of Edward, the bigotry of Mary, and the wary caution of Elizabeth; all these seem to have been directed by the gracious wisdom and goodness of Providence, to the most salutary ends. The daily advancement and progress of Learning had furnish'd a supply of most able Divines; they had leisure to trace up the several corruptions of Popery to their respective sources; and the successive changes of the times had taught them a most instructive lesson of moderation. They perceiv'd that the Church of Rome, however debas'd and corrupted, was still the Church of Christ; Christianity lay at the bottom, how much soever disfigur'd and adulterated. The substance of the garment was yet whole and entire, though so lamentably distain'd by spots, and deform'd by wrinkles. They resolv'd therefore to proceed with the utmost caution, lest by their too hasty and violent attempts to obliterate the spots and smooth the wrinkles, they should unfortu-

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nately tear the original web. In short, to drop the figure, they determin'd to adhere scrupulously to this important fundamental maxim, to depart no farther from the Religion of Rome, than the Religion of Rome had deviated from the primitive Religion of Christ.

Respecting the Government of the Church, they were fully sensible that every nation had an indefeasible Right to settle and appoint it's own, independently of any foreign Power. Renouncing then all obedience to the Pope, and wishing to avoid that Solœcism in Politics, of a government within a government, they acknowledg'd the Sovereign of the State to be the Head of the Church, styling him, over all persons, and in all causes, as well ecclesiastical as civil, in these his dominions supreme. The Hierarchy they found to have taken place at a period by many years prior to the Papal usurpations; and moreover conceiving it peculiarly adapted to our civil constitution, they of course retain'd it; vesting the ministration of all spiritual offices in the order of Priests, save only those of Confirmation and Ordination, which were reserv'd to the higher order of Bishops; the nomination of whom, as also of two Archbishops, was left to the King: and the Prelates retain'd their
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ancient privilege of sitting and voting with the temporal Peers in the house of Lords, as constituent members of that highest Court of Judicature. The inferior Clergy had also a house of Convocation, to which they elected Clerical Members, in the same manner as the Laity return'd their Representatives to the house of Commons; while the Archbishops and Bishops compos'd the upper house of Convocation, analogous to the House of Peers: but that part of the original Church-government has within the present century sunk into disuse; no Convocation sitting, and the Clergy promiscuously voting with the Laity for members of the house of Commons. Ecclesiastical Courts, were constituted for the cognizance of some particular causes, chiefly matrimonial and testamentary; but ever subject to the superior controul of common and statute Law: and the Clergy, divested of all temporal power, were confin'd to the ministration of the word and sacraments, to teaching and preaching, and the cure of Souls.

Respecting the Liturgy of the Church, with it's various forms and offices, our Reformers retain'd as much of the Romish as was sound and orthodox, rejecting only such parts as were idolatrous and superstitious; pruning away an immense num-

ber of idle and absurd Ceremonies, and continuing only a few of the most significant ; and those too not as essential, but merely for the sake of order and decency. To avoid diversity and contrariety of doctrine, they promulgated what are called the thirty-nine Articles of Religion, containing the sense of the Church on various points ; and to which they requir'd subscription from all such as should be call'd to any office or administration in the same : and therein gave the finishing blow to all the errors and corruptions of the Romish Church, by the ever memorable assertion in the sixth Article, that " Holy Scripture containeth
" all things necessary to salvation : so that what-
" soever is not read therein, nor may be proved
" thereby, is not to be requir'd of any man,
" that it should be believed as an article of the
" faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to
" salvation."

Such is the outline of the Church of England, as settl'd by our first Reformers ; and such as it exists at this day ; save only the alteration I before noticed, respecting the houses of Convocation ; and to which I may add, that as our civil liberties became better understood, and more firmly secur'd, the rigours of the Act of Uniformity were
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done away by the Act of Toleration. You will observe, that hitherto I have related only; not vindicated. That remains yet to be done; but previously thereunto, I am to call your attention to that fundamental doctrine at present so furiously attack'd, of the Divinity of Christ. A point on which I scruple not to assert, that whatever Church presumes to controvert or deny it, that Church is so far from being free from spot or wrinkle, that it is one universal blot. In abhorrence whereof, may we ever cordially unite in giving all laud and glory to God the Father, to God the Son, and to God the Holy Ghost.

AMEN.

SERMON IV.

PREACH'D ON SUNDAY JANUARY II, 1795.

THE object of these discourses being a defence and vindication of our national Church, it was expedient to clear the way by a short deduction of the history of Christianity, from it's first foundation by Christ and his Apostles, to the period of it's reception by the Roman Empire, comprehending the whole civiliz'd world, under Constantine; thence through the ages of darkness and ignorance that ensued upon the overthrow of that Empire by the Northern Barbarians, down to it's lamentable corruption under the usurp'd Papal Tyranny: with an account of the reformation from those corruptions, which enlighten'd no inconsiderable part of Europe, in the beginning of the sixteenth century; and a still more particular detail

detail of the establishment and settlement of the Church of England, on the basis of that Reformation. But amidst all the superstitious and even idolatrous errors of Popery, however they may have violated the mediatorial dignity of Christ, by admitting other Mediators in Saints and Angels; nay, however they may have depreciated his Divinity by addressing religious worship to other objects, as Images and Relics, and by supposing him bound to pay obedience and submission to the commands of his Virgin-Mother; yet had they never the hardiness to deny Christ's Divinity, or that of the Holy Ghost; nor did they ever renounce the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, or refuse the adoration of three Persons in one God. And as I before observ'd to you that our English Reformers determin'd to adhere scrupulously to the fundamental maxim of departing from the religion of Rome no farther than the religion of Rome had deviated from the primitive religion of Christ; so they consequently adopted this important doctrine of the Trinity, although a tenet of the Romish Church, from a full conviction of it's being a genuine doctrine of primitive Christianity, founded on the pure and unadulterated Scriptures of truth and inspiration.

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It hath seem'd good to the divine wisdom, for reasons best known to God, but which have a manifest reference to our condition in this world, as free agents in a state of probation: it hath seem'd good, I say, to the divine wisdom, that Heresies should never cease in the Church: even as was shadow'd by the Parable in the Gospel, where the Husbandman had no sooner sowed the good seed, than the Enemy follow'd close after with his tares. Thus no sooner had Jesus ascended to the bosom of his Father, and his faithful disciples, having received the completion of his promise by the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, had enter'd upon the execution of their Master's commission, going forth and preaching every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following: no sooner had this infancy of the Gospel commenc'd, than we read of the instant appearance of the first Arch-heretic in the person of Simon Magus. Dry and tedious would it be in the extreme, to detail to you his various errors, with those of his early followers, such as Ebion and Cerinthus, with the other founders of the Gnostic Sect, as contain'd in the most antient ecclesiastical writers. Suffice it to say, that the common ground-work of all was the denial of Christ's Divinity. In opposition to
this

this most pestilent heresy, the beloved disciple of Christ, Saint John, judg'd it necessary to write a fourth Gospel, in addition to the three already publish'd by Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and that as it should seem, principally, if not solely, with a view to confirm and establish this important and essential doctrine. When the Gospel had attain'd to maturity by the ever-memorable conversion of the Roman Empire from Pagan Idolatry to the faith of Christ, then did Satan take care to revive his darling heresy in the person of one Arius, a Presbyter of Alexandria in Egypt: for the suppression of which, a general council conven'd at Nice in Bithynia, compos'd and publish'd that orthodox confession of Faith, which our Church retains in her service under the appellation of the Nicene Creed. Lastly, when in modern times Christianity was reform'd from those errors and corruptions which Papal Rome had accumulated during the long night of ignorance, then did the grand enemy again broach his long-exploded blasphemies in the person of one Socinus, a native of Italy. From the two last mention'd revivers and propagators of this heresy of Simon Magus, their modern followers assume the names of Arians and Socinians. It is not worth while to point out to you the various divisions and subdivisions of these

these Heretics, resting chiefly on nice metaphysical distinctions; seeing they all agree in the leading tenet of the denial of Christ's Divinity. The way of truth is but one: the wanderings of error are unlimited. However, as they are all unanimous in asserting the Unity of the Godhead, in opposition to the Trinity of Persons in that Unity, they may all be compriz'd under that title of Unitarians, which of late they have pretty generally affected.

Now of these two simple, but diametrically opposite propositions, Christ is God, and Christ is not God; it is necessary that one only can be true, and the other must of course be false. The question then is, which is the true opinion, and which the false; in other words, is Christ God, or is He not God. And the infinite importance of this question is easily demonstrable. We maintain that Christ is God, and in consequence of that belief we address to Him our prayers and praises, with all religious worship. If our opinion be wrong, we are guilty of the most damnable idolatry in attributing that glory to the creature which is due only to the Creator, God blessed for ever; even that jealous God who will not give his glory to another. Our adversaries maintain that Christ is not God; and of course

course address Him not with any religious worship. If their opinion be wrong, they incur the damnable guilt of withholding that worship which God demands as unalienably his due. Such are the dangerous and fatal consequences of error on either side of this momentous point. But how is this question to be decided? that our finite reason is utterly incompetent to comprehend this mystery of infinity, is pretty generally agreed by both parties; and both of consequence appeal to the written word of God, reveal'd in the holy Scriptures; conscious that we can know no more of God than He has been graciously pleas'd to discover of Himself. Here then the matter is at issue. We produce texts, declarative of Christ's co-equality with the Father. They produce texts, declarative of Christ's inferiority to the Father. To these our reply is obvious. We say that all such texts manifestly relate to the human nature assum'd by Christ; whom we assert to be equal with the Father as touching his Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching his manhood. Their reply to our arguments is different, according to the kind of opponents they have to encounter. To the learned, and such as are tolerably vers'd in Biblical knowledge, they endeavour to evade the force of the texts which assert or imply the Divinity of Christ,

Christ, by forc'd interpretations; perverting the sense, or allegorizing the meaning in a way that would destroy the credit of any the plainest history whatever; and by mis-quotations, strain'd perversions, and false translations, would fain persuade us, that our doctrine of the Trinity is novel, unknown to the Apostles, to the primitive Christians, and to the Fathers of the first three centuries; in short, to be reckon'd among, and even reprobated more than the other corruptions of Christianity, which sprung up so plentifully in the dark ages. To the unlearned, who compose the bulk of mankind, they address themselves in a different manner. Appealing to that pride, which more or less is a latent principle or ingredient in the composition of human nature ever since the fall of Man, they ask with a triumphant sneer, Have you common sense? say, if you have, how can one be three, and three one? will you, can you believe such a contradiction? and why? because your Parsons tell you so. And why do they tell you so? they cannot be such fools as to believe it themselves, but are the menial servants of the establishment; the devoted slaves of creeds and articles of human invention, and base enough to accept the wages of iniquity; and as dirty hirelings ready to do the vilest drudgery, and to preach the grossest absurdities

ties, in consideration of being paid for it. Such are the methods by which Sectaries aim to propagate their heresies; such the calumnies with which they load your lawful Pastors: thus would the wolves persuade the sheep to discard their faithful guardians and protectors the dogs, in order that themselves may ravage the fold with impunity.

Having thus stated the nature and singular importance of this question, and given you a specimen of the insidious arts and barefac'd calumnies resorted to by the opposers of the Trinitarian doctrine; I wish here to remind you, that having in the course of my ministry among you, sometimes exclusively, and much oftener incidentally discours'd upon this subject, You therefore can not expect any thing new at present. To advert to the formal defences of Unitarianism, to expose their various fallacies of mistranslations, misquotations, and perversions of different texts of Scripture, and passages of ancient writers, is a task which has been most ably and satisfactorily executed by eminent Divines of our Church, particularly by one who is now seated on the episcopal bench, and is an honour to the age and nation; but is by no means suited to the pulpit, especially in addressing a plain audience. The scanty portion of time yet remain-

remaining to be allotted to this discourse, shall be employ'd, first in obviating their popular insinuations, and then in pointing out to your notice a few out of the many plain scriptural proofs of the Trinity: intending in my next to explain and recommend some methods, whereby any sincere, however unlearned reader of the Bible, may fully satisfy himself of the truth of this fundamental article. First then let me review their popular objections.

How, they ask, can three be one, and one three? I answer, by no means: no more than it can be noon at midnight, or midnight at noon. But who ever told you this? Your Parsons, they reply. Then your Parsons must be fools and liars. But do we, or do our creeds affirm that there are three Gods? so far from it, that the Athanasian creed says expressly there are not three Gods, but one God. But how then, answer they, can the Father be God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God? Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are three; and if each of these be God, there are three Gods. This we deny; affirming the three Persons to be one God. How can you explain, or even comprehend this? alas! we are totally unable to comprehend, much less can we explain it. Why then do you require it to be believ'd, as an article of Faith? On the authority

authority of Scripture. I find it to be the uniform doctrine of the Bible, that there is but one God, the Father and Maker of all things. Yet I read in the same Bible such passages applied to Christ and the Holy Ghost, as can be competent to God alone. Some of these passages I shall soon point out to you; but must first notice their sarcasms on creeds and Parsons. Creeds, you are told, are of human invention, the work of fallible men. We grant it; but did the compilers of these Creeds deliver the doctrines therein contain'd, as their own, or as the doctrines of God in Scripture? A Judge on the bench is a fallible man; he is bound to decide by the Laws of the land: if his sentence be not conformable to those laws, it will be revers'd; if it be in conformity with them, it must stand. So with regard to the compilers of Creeds and articles; as also with us the Preachers of the Gospel. The Scriptures are our sole guide. If what we deliver be not consonant to them, reject it: if it be, it is the word of God, and as such infallible, though deliver'd by fallible men. But we are Hirelings. By this they can not mean that we reap any additional pecuniary advantage by preaching this particular doctrine; but that being bound by our subscription to articles, we are of course oblig'd to adhere to the doctrines of the Church, whether
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in unison with our own private sentiments, or otherwise. Suppose we preach in opposition to these articles. We shall incur the guilt of perjury, and be liable to suspension by the Bishop. True: he may suspend us from executing the duties of our office; but cannot deprive us of our legal emoluments, our Livings being our Freeholds. I leave you then to judge, whether a man, who according to their statement can be base enough to preach to others what he disbelieves himself, whether such an one would be likely to boggle at perjury; and not rather gladly take refuge in suspension, as relieving him from the irksome task, and continuing to him the profits, without the labours of his Office.

But enough of this. Let me only add, that while an immoral or licentious, a vicious or profane Clergyman, ever is, and justly deserves to be an object of your abhorrence and contempt; the groundless and impudent calumnies I have now adverted to are equally beneath a man of common candour to utter, and a man of common sense to believe.

I now proceed to point out to your notice some few out of the numerous texts which the Bible
affords

affords, whence we are led to believe that Christ is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God. When our Saviour, at his final parting with his Apostles, gave them a commission to baptize all nations, it was in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Saint John, who, as I before remark'd, wrote his Gospel professedly to counteract the heresy of Simon Magus and the Gnostics, opens that Gospel with this irrefragable testimony. In the beginning, meaning from all eternity, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. On which memorable passage I would suggest two brief observations; first, that the Word was a title of the Messiah, or Christ, familiar to the Jewish writers; and secondly, that this expression of the inspir'd Apostle contains a mystery exactly congenial to that of the Trinity. For the difference is equally essential between two and one as between three and one: yet we are told that the Word, or Christ, was with God, implying a distinction of Person; and yet was God, asserting an Unity of Nature. Saint John goes on to affirm of Christ, All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. Christ then is the Creator of all things; therefore Christ is God. Our adversaries allow Jesus to have been a good Man, who did no sin,
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neither was guile found in his mouth. They allow Him also to have been an inspir'd Prophet, full of grace and truth. Surely then He could not lie. Now what says He of Himself? I and the Father are One. He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father. Before Abraham was, I am. Where you may observe, that in the Old Testament the Almighty God appropriates to Himself the peculiar appellation of *I Am*. When we read of any of the Prophets, whether under the Mosaic or Evangelic dispensation, offering worship and adoration to the glorious Beings who communicated to them divine messages, or revelations, we find them constantly check'd: See thou do it not; I am thy fellow-servant: worship God. But when the long incredulous Saint Thomas ador'd Christ, saying, my Lord, and my God; Christ reproves him not for it. Saint Paul tells the Romans, Christ is over All, God blessed for ever. In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is written, To the Son He, that is God, saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. Of the Holy Ghost we read in the Acts, that when Ananias and Sapphira lied against the Holy Ghost, they lied not unto men, but unto God.

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But I must remember my promise, not to detain you too long at one time. Here then I dismiss you for the present. In my next I purpose laying down some methods, by the use whereof any sincere Christian may obtain full and ample satisfaction on this point; and the following shall be allotted to the consideration of the Athanasian Creed.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be honour and glory for evermore.

AMEN.

SERMON V.

PREACH'D ON SUNDAY MARCH 8, 1795.

THOUGH my principal intention in this discourse be, as stated in my last, to recommend some few methods, whereby every reader of the Bible, however unlearned, may satisfy himself of the truth of the Trinitarian doctrine; I think it necessary in the first place, to address a few words on the subject to such of my Christian hearers, as through a total want of education, are utterly unable to read at all. Such have souls to be saved, such have duties to perform; and of those duties Faith is a most essential one. But their Faith not being grounded on knowledge, must be taken up on trust. For their instruction chiefly is the Christian ministry appointed: others may have, and often have great need of being reminded of their duty; these must be

be taught it. To such then I would suggest the propriety at least, if not the safety, of listening to their own Pastors, in preference to Strangers. In spite of any sneers of the Dissenters, I scruple not to affirm, that to our charge is the care of their souls committed by the Bishop; and if we teach them untruths, we shall have it to answer for at the dreadful day of Judgement, while they shall stand acquitted on the score of their ignorance. God forbid that the poor unletter'd Papist should be condemn'd for that Idolatry which he knows not to be such, and which his Priests daily inculcate. I grant indeed that the Sectaries spare not to insinuate how much better men and better Christians themselves are than the Ministers of the Church; but judge of them by their works: remember the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican; and know that boasting is no proof of excellence.

How, or in what manner the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost can each be God, and yet not three Gods, but one God, is equally unknown to the most learned Divine, as to the most ignorant labourer. We deduce this doctrine from Scripture, which Scripture we know to be the word of God; which God we know cannot lie. Therefore we

implicitly believe it ourselves; and therefore as in duty bound, we press the same implicit belief on you. That such is the declaration of God in Scripture, you can but have our word: that such is not the declaration of God in Scripture, you can but have their word. Their appeals to reason are ridiculous: the doctrine being infinitely above reason. Still more ridiculous are their suggestions of the folly of believing what we can not comprehend. Alas! it is no more than we are oblig'd to do every day. We know that we have a soul, and we know that we have a body. We know farther that the union of soul and body constitutes a living man; and that their separation from each other leaves only a dead carcase. But how are these two join'd? how are they parted? when did the soul first enter the body? how does it act upon it? why can not the body even subsist without the soul, but on being depriv'd thereof immediately tends first to putrefaction, and then to dissolution into it's original dust? To these, and a thousand more such questions, the answer of the wise man and the fool is the same,—We can not tell. Nor can we tell of the Trinity how it is, but barely that it is. But if any among the unlearned of my flock shall be unwarily seduc'd to hearken to the insidious insinuations so zealously instill'd by our opponents,
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and rather take the word of a Sectary than that of their proper Pastor, I would advise all such instantly to quit the Church for the Meeting-house ; since I see not how they can with a clear conscience, and without idolatry, join with us in humble supplication to the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three Persons, and One God, to have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

Thus much being premis'd, I now come to the main drift of this discourse ; which is, to suggest some few methods whereby the plain reader of the Bible may, as I apprehend, obtain full satisfaction for himself on this contested point. Acquir'd learning, critical skill, knowledge of the original languages, are not here demanded : all I ask is common sense, freedom from prejudice, a pious disposition, and a sincere heart. Of these, if common sense be wanting, all reasoning must be nugatory ; if prejudice prevail, the jaundic'd eye sees every object of it's own colour ; without a pious disposition, the Bible has little chance to be read at all, still less to be read with due attention ; and without a sincere heart, it will most probably be read as it is by the modern sceptical Atheists, usurping and disgracing the title of Philosophers ; who read it with the sole view of ridiculing and picking holes in it. To such

then as would wish to satisfy themselves whether the doctrine of the Trinity be really scriptural, or not, without pinning their faith on Creeds, Churches, or Preachers, it can not but be seasonable, nay it is a duty incumbent on the Christian Minister to give every assistance in his power. And this is what I now purpose to attempt.

First then, whoever consults the sacred volume with a view of regulating his faith, as well as his practice, must remember that he is to take his faith from the Bible, not to bring his faith to it. If he have already form'd a preconceiv'd opinion, and should meet with any text which seems to militate against that opinion, he will find himself tempted to twist and torture that text till he can bring it to a seeming conformity; nay probably, for it often has been done, will sooner give up the text than the opinion. To avoid this absurdity, I would recommend to the pious and humble reader, to take all scriptural expressions in the plain sense suggested by the words themselves at first view, in their most obvious acceptation. On perusing the Gospels, he will find that they contain a narrative of the life and death of a man, whose name was Jesus; a man, born of a woman, and as such, of few days, and full of trouble: that He taught a new religion and was
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put to death for so doing. All this might have been competent to any other man. But he will find many circumstances recorded of this man, which could not be competent to any other man. His birth, as well as the time and place of it, had been foretold many ages previous to the event ; his name was fix'd by an Angel before He was conceived in the womb ; his conception was miraculous, his Mother being a pure Virgin, impregnated by the Holy Ghost ; or as Saint Luke expresses it, overshadow'd by the power of the Highest ; and therefore, says the Angel to Mary, therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. As the reader advances, he will perceive the whole complection of his life in full consistency with the wonders of his birth ; that He spake as never man spake, and did the works which no other man did. Attend Him to the cross ; there behold Him bleed, and expire ; thence see his lifeless body convey'd to Joseph's tomb. Here will the reader pause. This man, he will say, was certainly a most extraordinary Character, and every thing hitherto has bespoke the Son of God ; but now I see He could be no more than Man ; for alas ! the common fate of mortality has arrested Him : there he lies, dead, and buried. Such seem to have been the sentiments of his own disciples, even of them

them who had constantly acknowledg'd Him to be the Messiah, and who trusted that this had been He who should have redeemed Israel. But short is this awful pause of suspense and despondency. See the third morning dawns in the east. He revives, He rises! He bursts the fetters of death and the grave, and leads captivity captive. For the space of forty days He shews Himself alive by many infallible proofs; and then, in the presence of his disciples, He ascends up into heaven. And as Saint Luke expressly informs us, they, that is the disciples, worshipped him.

On this last recited passage I would not hesitate to rest with the unletter'd reader the satisfactory proof of Christ's Divinity. Our adversaries are here reduc'd to a wretched quibble, endeavouring to distinguish two sorts of worship: a distinction for which they are indebted to the Papists, who first invented it to palliate their worship of images and relics, of Saints, and of the Virgin Mary. To these they pretend that they address an inferior worship, reserving the superior to God alone. A distinction this, which the unlearned can not comprehend, and the learned know to be groundless. It has been suggested also, that the disciples, struck with astonishment at the stupendous sight of their
Master's

Master's human body of flesh and blood quitting the surface of the earth, and rising gradually in the air, till a cloud hid him from their eyes; struck I say with astonishment, they fell on their faces, depriv'd in a manner of their senses, and not knowing what they did. But what will the plain reader say to this? the disciples worshipped Him, and He forbade them not; therefore worship is his due: but worship is due to God alone; therefore He, Christ, is God.

On farther progress in the perusal of the Bible, we shall find every name and every attribute of God ascrib'd to Christ. By the Prophet Isaiah He is stil'd the everlasting Father; in exact conformity to his own assertion, I and the Father are One. He is eternal, the first, and the last. Saint Paul tells the Colossians, that Christ is before all things, and by Him all things consist. Just as Saint John asserts of that Word which was made flesh, and dwelt among us, even by that Word were all things made, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. He is omnipresent. While conversing with his disciples on earth, He calls Himself the Son of Man, which is in heaven. Sitting as He now is at the right hand of God on the throne of glory in heaven, yet as He told his disciples, lo!

I am

I am with you always, even to the end of the world; so now wheresoever two or three are gathered together in his name, there is He in the midst of them. He is Omniscient. While He was on earth, He knew all men, and needed not that any should tell Him; for he knew what was in man. Now He is in heaven, He searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins. - In consequence of these two attributes or qualities of Omnipresence and Omniscience, He is even now present here, in the midst of this assembly: to Him do I appeal for my sincerity in preaching this doctrine; to Him do each of you stand amenable for your faith herein. In consequence of these attributes He will one day come to judge the world in righteousness. Then as Saint Paul tells the Corinthians, we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. The same Apostle tells Timothy that the Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing, and his kingdom. But God is Judge alone; God alone is eternal, omnipresent, and omniscient. What conclusion then follows from these premises? even this, that Christ is God.

In the New Testament, particularly in Saint John's Gospel, are recorded various conversations of our blessed Saviour, both with his own disciples, and with the unbelieving Jews. Many of the expressions which He uses are involv'd in no inconsiderable degree of obscurity. Of this the Unitarians endeavour to take advantage, and deny them to contain any proofs of Christ's Divinity. I shall not attempt an explanation of them, some of them being possibly not fully comprehended by the most learned; but the unlearned may easily collect in what sense they were understood by those to whom they were address'd. You will observe, that Jesus is uniformly call'd the Son of God. That title we grant to have been sometimes applied to others; though we maintain that the appellation of the only-begotten Son was never confer'd on any but Jesus. But does this imply equality with the Father? you will find that the Jews so understood it. In the fifth Chapter of Saint John's Gospel is recorded the miraculous cure wrought by Jesus on the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, on the Sabbath-day. The Jews seeking to slay him for this, Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore, adds the Evangelist, the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because

cause He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making Himself equal with God. Again in the tenth chapter of the same Gospel, Jesus having spoke those memorable words, I and my Father are one; the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answer'd them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered Him, saying, For a good work we stone Thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a Man, makest Thyself God. Many similar passages will occur to the attentive reader, which for brevity's sake I omit, and proceed to the finishing scene of the cross. In the plain narrative of the Gospel-history you read that Jesus Christ, the subject of that history, after a life spent in doing good, having at length finish'd the work of his Ministry, was betray'd by Judas, seiz'd in the garden, taken before the Jewish Council, examin'd before the Priests and Elders, found guilty on his own confession; then sentenc'd to death by the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate, and instantly drag'd to execution by the Roman Soldiers, and nail'd to the cross. At the same time the Governor himself pronounc'd Him innocent, even while he infamously abandon'd Him to the fury of the people,
incited

incited by the malice and envy of the Rulers. That Jesus liv'd and died guiltless, is acknowledg'd by all Christians, of every sect or denomination. Let us enquire then on what grounds He was condemn'd. We learn from Saint Matthew, that the chief Priests and Elders and all the Council sought false witness against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none; yea though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. This account is farther explain'd by Saint Mark, who tells us, that many bare false witness against Him, but their witness agreed not together. They then endeavour'd to substantiate against Him a charge of some intention of destroying their Temple. We heard Him say, I will destroy this Temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together. Thus baffl'd and disappointed, but still persevering, at last the High Priest stood up in the middle, and having tried in vain to get an answer from Jesus, who disdain'd to reply to such frivolous and inconsistent charges, he puts to Him this decisive question, Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? or according to Saint Matthew, I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us, whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. To this decisive question thus solemnly ask'd,

ask'd, He plainly and decisively answers, I am. Then the High Priest rent his clothes, and said, what need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard his blasphemy: what think ye? and they all condemned Him to be guilty of death.

Here let me address you in the words of the High Priest, What think Ye? Ye have heard the charge, a charge of blasphemy, and that blasphemy expressly condemn'd by the Law of God given to Moses. And what was the blasphemy? that Jesus acknowledg'd Himself to be the Son of God. By this expression it is plain that his enemies understood Him as arrogating Divinity to Himself; otherwise they could not have condemn'd Him. It is as plain that He design'd they should understand Him so; otherwise as an explanation of his words in a lower sense would effectually have quash'd the accusation, so we cannot suppose that He would patiently have submitted to a sentence founded on a misconstruction which might have been so easily rectified, and which even the truth itself oblig'd Him to rectify. Clearly then did Jesus acquiesce in the sense put upon his words by his judges; and as clearly did He thereby declare Himself to be God. If then He was not God, He was manifestly guilty of falsehood as well as blasphemy,

phemy; and the Unitarian must on his own principles approve of the bloody sentence, and pronounce the Saviour and Redeemer of the world to have suffer'd justly. But what think Ye? is it in a guilty Malefactor that ye have plac'd all your hopes of salvation? does not every pious hearer even shudder at the horrid suggestion? Let the Unitarian and his brother Jew brood over their most execrable blasphemies; while the true Christian adores and glorifies in the Person of the blessed Jesus, his Saviour, his Redeemer, and his God!

I will conclude this discourse with recommending one method more to such of my hearers, as may wish for still farther satisfaction on this important point. It is that of comparing Scripture with itself; or collating various texts one with another. But as this may be too difficult a task for the unletter'd reader, and requires more time than can well be spar'd by the man of business; I would inform such that the work is already executed to their hands in a most masterly manner, in a small and cheap book, intitl'd, *The Catholic doctrine of a Trinity*, by the Reverend William Jones. You will there find upwards of an hundred short clear arguments, all express'd in the terms of the Holy Scripture. And having hitherto chiefly dwelt
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upon

upon the Divinity of the second Person in the Trinity, and but briefly touch'd on that of the third; I will close with a specimen of his manner, in a proof of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost.

Read then the sixth chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah. You will there find a most sublime description of a Vision, wherein the Prophet beheld the Lord Jehovah sitting upon a throne of glory. Mine eyes, says he, have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. God vouchsafes to send him on an errand; Go, and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Then turn to the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and mark the words of Saint Paul to the Jews: Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the Prophet unto our Fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. Here the same words which Isaiah declares to have been spoken by God, are by Saint Paul declar'd to have been spoken by the Holy Ghost. Isaiah was inspir'd, and Saint Paul was inspir'd: nor can Inspiration err. What follows? What can follow, but this, that the Holy Ghost is God.

Doubt

Doubt ye not then that the Holy Ghost is God: doubt ye not that Christ Jesus is God: doubt ye not but that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, though three Persons, are nevertheless but One God. This is the true Catholic Faith; in this Faith were we all baptiz'd; even in the Name of this ever-blessed Trinity in Unity: to whom be ascrib'd all Adoration and Praise through the Ages of Eternity.

AMEN.

SERMON VI.

PREACH'D ON SUNDAY MARCH 22, 1795.

IN my two last discourses I have been pretty copious and explicit on the subject of the Trinity. I have laid before you the infinite importance of the doctrine; I have pointed out several single texts of Scripture declaring the true and proper Divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; I have suggested some methods whereby every plain and sincere, however unlearned reader of the Bible may fully satisfy himself on this point; and for his farther assistance I have recommended to his notice a short and cheap treatise on the subject. I have also remark'd to you, that all such passages of Holy Writ as either express or imply an inferiority of the Son to the Father, are capable of a plain meaning by applying them to the human nature assum'd by Christ; and when so understood, are perfectly re-
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concilable to the doctrine of the Trinity. Let me here add, that the Author of the book recommended has been peculiarly successful on this point; having fairly produc'd every text urg'd against us by our adversaries, and compleatly obviated and invalidated every argument attempted to be grounded upon them. I will here farther observe, that whoever studies the Scripture on Trinitarian principles, will find the system of Man's Redemption and Salvation by Christ, however wonderful and mysterious, yet uniformly consistent throughout, and a steady foundation of rational faith and hope: while on the contrary, the Unitarian will meet with nothing but a dark and confus'd Chaos of inconsistencies and contradictions, without any sure ground of faith or hope; and not improbably will proceed in the beaten track of what is call'd modern Philosophy, from Unitarianism to Deism, and thence into the gloomiest depths of Atheism.

I now proceed to the justification of our Church for retaining in her Liturgy that admirable Creed call'd the Athanasian. This is the grand mark whereat the envenom'd shafts of our adversaries are principally levell'd; on account of this we stand charg'd not only with bigotry and absurdity, but

what is still worse, with the most Antichristian uncharitableness. A serious and a cruel charge this, at any rate; and if false and groundless, such as I hope and trust I shall prove it to be, words can not adequately express it's unparallel'd malignity and impudence. Nay should it even be granted to rest on specious or plausible grounds, still it can not be vindicated from indecency, from arrogance, from ingratitude. The national Church is an essential part of the national Constitution: that Constitution not only protects in their civil Rights, but indulges full liberty of conscience to all who refuse to conform to that Church; permitting them to serve God in their own way, and that publicly, and without molestation; but it does not permit them to slander and revile the establish'd Church, and the national worship. The lenity and indulgence of Government have at least a claim upon their gratitude. The well-known Act of Toleration, whereon all their privileges and immunities are founded, contains an exception with regard to all such as deny the Trinity; and more than that, there is a Statute now existing in full force, and which was pass'd some years subsequent to the Toleration Act, in the same Reign; whereby it is enacted, that if any person, educated in the Christian Religion, or professing the same, shall by writing,

writing, printing, teaching, or advised speaking deny any one of the Persons in the Holy Trinity to be God, or maintain that there are more Gods than One; he shall undergo certain penalties and disabilities therein specified. Were Government inclin'd to carry this Law into execution, which as it never has been done, so I sincerely hope it never will; but if it should, I see but one subterfuge left to the Unitarian, but that one not devoid of truth; namely, that he does not profess the Christian Religion, but another Religion, of quite a different nature and complection.

But let us now attend to our adversaries charge, not against Creeds and Articles in general, all of which they are for sweeping away indiscriminately; but against the Athanasian Creed in particular. Our Church, we are told, denounces with awful vengeance the everlasting punishment of Hell against those who do not believe in a Creed which they can not understand; a mysterious Creed, drawn up by some unknown writer in the dark ages of the Church. Hereby we incur a breach of true charity, and by so doing depart from the pure model of primitive Christianity. This is the charge, which must be examin'd and refuted; but it may not be amiss previously to suggest to your notice

some observations on the nature of Christian Faith, and of the modes or forms of professing that Faith, which are adopted by the Church of England.

The necessity of Faith is obvious. He that cometh to God, must believe that he is. To the Atheist, who says there is no God, the very name of Religion is an unmeaning sound. The Deist acknowledges there is a God, but grounds his belief on the works of nature, and the deductions of reason; rejecting as both false and needless the light of Revelation. But we are the disciples of Christ, professing ourselves Christians: and our opponents lay claim to the same privileges and distinctions. Our Faith then must depend on Revelation: in other words, we are bound to believe whatsoever God has been pleas'd to reveal to us in Scripture. That Scripture acquaints us with the original creation and subsequent fall of Man; together with his Redemption and final salvation by the means of a wonderful Personage nam'd Jesus, or the Saviour. The Old Testament was written before the appearance of this Jesus in the world; the New Testament after it. The former is prophetic of what was to happen to Him; the latter is historical of what actually did happen to Him.

Him. The antient Jews were bound to believe that such things as their Prophets foretold would certainly come to pass: the modern Christians are bound to believe that such things as the Evangelists have related did assuredly come to pass, according to the accounts by them recorded.

But this Faith or Belief being an inward act of the mind, known only to God and ourselves, it becomes farther necessary that we outwardly profess it; according to the doctrine of Saint Paul, who tells us, that with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. From the first planting of the Gospel by Christ and his Apostles, we uniformly find some short test or confession of Faith requir'd of all who from among either Jews or Gentiles were converted to Christianity. This seems to have been usually no more than an acknowledgment of Jesus being the Christ or Son of God. One or two instances from among many may suffice. When Philip had preached to the Ethiopian Eunuch in his chariot, as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water, and the Eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? and Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered

answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Again, when at Philippi Paul and Silas being cast into prison for preaching the word, the prison doors were miraculously open'd and every one's bands were loosed; the astonish'd Jailer starting out of his sleep, and with difficulty prevented by Paul from killing himself, call'd for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before the Apostles, saying, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? and they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Now that these short declarations are tantamount to an acknowledgement of Christ's being God, will evidently appear by comparing them with another conversion wrought by Christ Himself. Jesus had opened the eyes of a man who was blind from his birth. The Jews, after a captious examination both of the man, and of his parents, cast him out of the Synagogue, or excommunicated him. Jesus found him again, and said unto him, dost thou believe on the Son of God? he answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord I believe. And he worshipped Him. By this act of worshipping Him he acknowledg'd Him to be God; and Jesus, the humble Jesus,

fus, acquiesc'd, and graciously accepted his adoration.

Now as the Scripture history is by the sacred and inspir'd writers brought down but a few years only below the final departure of the blessed Jesus from earth, after that period we must have recourse to the works of other early writers of Ecclesiastical history, many of which are still extant. From these we learn, that the primitive Churches, founded by the Apostles, or their immediate successors, for some time admitted new converts to Baptism on the bare profession of this simple form, taken from the baptismal institution by Christ Himself: I believe in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. As the numbers of converts were multiplied, it was judg'd expedient to draw up a larger form, comprehending sundry particulars concerning Jesus, as related in the Scripture; and this form is what we now call the Apostles Creed; not as being the work of the Apostles themselves, but as being drawn from the pure fountains of Apostolical Scripture. Some time afterwards, new Heretics springing up, and corrupting the Orthodox Faith, a general Council of Bishops conven'd at Nice, having formally condemn'd the blasphemous tenets of Arius, in order to guard the church from those pestilent errors

errors for the future, thought proper to compile a still fuller profession of faith; and this form is call'd, from the name of the place where it was compos'd, the Nicene Creed. In still farther process of time the impugners of the Trinity, calling to their aid the absurd Metaphysics then in vogue, endeavour'd to darken and elude the plain truth by numberless nice and subtle distinctions, unintelligible even to themselves, but apparently calculated to puzzle and perplex. Here too the Orthodox found it necessary to follow them; and hence arose the obnoxious Creed known by the name of the Athanasian. And here I readily concede to our adversaries, that neither it's Author, the date of it's composition, or of it's reception into the Church, are certainly known. We are sure it has been admitted upwards of eight hundred years, and not improbably above eleven hundred: and it took it's name from one Athanasius, who greatly distinguish'd himself as a Controversialist in opposition to Arius. Hence as the Antitrinitarians were from their leader stil'd Arians, so the Trinitarians, as also this Creed, as professing the support of the Trinitarian doctrine, obtain'd the Title of Athanasian.

Let us now examine the sentiments of our Church on this subject; and for this we must have
recourse

recourse to her Articles. I have before in a former discourse quoted her sixth Article; but as it is a very short one, I must beg leave once again to bespeak your attention to it. "Holy Scripture
 " containeth all things necessary to salvation; so
 " that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be
 " proved thereby, is not to be required of any man
 " that it should be believed as an article of the
 " faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to sal-
 " vation." From hence it is but a very short step to the eighth Article, which runs in these words.
 " The three Creeds, Nice Creed, Athanasius Creed,
 " and that which is commonly called the Apostles
 " Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and be-
 " lieved, for they may be proved by most certain
 " warrants of Holy Scripture." Here you have in the plainest words the reason why our Church has thought proper to retain this Creed. She meddles not with the disputed points respecting it's author, or it's date; but only declares the necessity of believing it, because warranted by Scripture.

It is not my intention here to enter upon an Analysis of this Creed; which to any observant reader will appear to consist of but two principal doctrines, that of the Trinity, and that of the Incarnation. On the first of these it declares that all
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the several Attributes belonging to the Godhead are alike competent to each Person; so that the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God; and yet not three Gods, but One God. And all idea of inferiority being incompatible with the notion of God, it of course declares that in this Trinity none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another; but the whole three Persons are coeternal together, and coequal. On the second point, it is a mere comment on that text of Saint John, The Word was made Flesh: which it guards against the perverse misrepresentations of the early Heretics; most truly asserting our blessed Saviour to be perfect God and perfect Man; of course equal to the Father as touching his Godhead, while inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood; and that although He be God and Man, yet He is not two, but One Christ.

I have already pointed out to you this gradation of Creeds, from the most simple profession of faith in the time of the Apostles, down to this last and most diffuse of all, the Athanasian. The very first implied a belief in the Trinity: I believe in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Antitrinitarian could not with the smallest degree

gree of decency object to this; but hug'd himself in a mental reservation, that these were not three distinct Persons, but only different names and titles. The Apostles Creed stiles Jesus, God's only Son, and our Lord. The Arian allow'd Him to be the Son of God, but not Himself God; and acknowledg'd Him to be our Lord and Master, as being Head of the Church which Himself had founded. The Nicene Creed goes a step farther, declaring Christ to be Very God of Very God, and of one substance with the Father. Here the Arian was stagger'd; but by degrees, and with the help of some metaphysical quibbles, he contriv'd to evade this also. At last comes the Athanasian Creed, and asserts in plain terms, that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. No farther subterfuge now remain'd. If the Arian acknowledg'd this, he must either give the lie to his own principles, or by renouncing those principles must cease to be an Arian. Unable to refute, he has recourse to abuse. Obstinate and determin'd in his opposition to the Trinitarian doctrine, his enmity against all creeds which maintain that doctrine is in exact proportion to the clearness and explicitness wherewith they maintain it. Now having shewn you in my two preceding discourses that the Trinitarian doctrine is the genuine doctrine of Scripture, I shall not scruple here to add,
that

that as our Church for that sole reason adopts it, so the zeal of every true Son of the Church in the defence of her several Creeds should rise in exact proportion to the virulence of our adversaries against them respectively : and of course I consider the Athanasian Creed as the grand bulwark of the Trinitarian doctrine, of the Church of England, and of Christianity itself.

But enough I trust has been said in vindication of this Creed on the point of it's Orthodoxy. Our adversaries chuse to give their objections a more popular turn ; and therefore declaim against it's uncharitableness, on account of what they are pleas'd to call it's damnatory clauses. Let the Creed speak for itself. " Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith ; which Faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." The plain meaning of which is no more than this ; None can plead a right to salvation by the Gospel without holding the Christian Faith, or believing the truths reveal'd in that Gospel. " And the Catholic Faith is this, that we worship One God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity." Here the doctrine of the Trinity is asserted to be a part of the necessary Catholic

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or Christian Faith. But the word Trinity not occurring in the Bible, this Creed proceeds to explain it's signification more at large; shewing that there are three distinct Persons, to each of whom every Attribute of the Godhead is ascrib'd in that same Scripture, which yet uniformly maintains there being one only God. After an ample discussion of this point, the Creed passes on to a second, respecting particularly the second Person in this Trinity. "Furthermore it is necessary to
"everlasting salvation, that he also believe rightly
"the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ." It then explains what the right Faith is, or what the Scriptures have revealed to us, on this subject also; and finally concludes with this declaration, "This
"is the Catholic Faith; which except a man be-
"lieve faithfully, he cannot be saved." Now here it is obvious to observe, that those explanatory passages which make up the bulk of the Creed, are intended solely for our information and satisfaction; being all of them adduc'd by way of arguments in proof and illustration of the main points, and of course having nothing to do with the damnatory clauses; and the whole is reducible to this simple assertion: Christian Faith is necessary to salvation; and Christian Faith includes the belief of the Trinity, and of Christ's Incarnation.

And for this both the Creed itself, and our Church for retaining it, are accus'd of the most flagrant violation of Christian Charity !

The Church of Rome has indeed the assurance to pronounce on her own bare authority, and without pretending any warrant from Scripture, that salvation is not to be had out of her communion ; and for this we justly accuse her of uncharitableness : and think it ground sufficient, even had we no other, to relinquish her communion. And in this odious light would the insidious Sectary fain put the Church of England. But we defy the charge, and boldly appeal to the Scripture. The Christian Religion is founded on a mutual covenant between the Creator and the Creature. Faith and good works are the conditions : salvation the reward of obedience, damnation the punishment of disobedience. For good works, our Saviour thus commissions his disciples : Go ye, and teach all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and Saint Paul accordingly denounces that God will render to every man according to his deeds ; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life ; but on the contrary, indignation and
wrath

wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil. Will they accuse Saint Paul of uncharitableness? For the other condition of Faith, hear our blessed Saviour's commission to his disciples, as recorded by Saint Mark. Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Will they dare to charge the Redeemer of mankind with uncharitableness? But I forget: they will not allow Jesus to be more than Man; and as such, the obscure and illiterate son of an honest Carpenter: of course not likely to know so much of the Religion instituted by Himself, as the enlighten'd Adepts of modern Philosophy! We, more humble Christians, acknowledge the terms of our salvation to be such as are announc'd by the sole Author of that salvation, even the blessed Jesus, the everlasting God of truth and love: to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, three Persons and One God, be address'd all prayer and praise from men and Angels, even all in heaven and earth, for ever and ever.

AMEN.

SERMON VII.

PREACH'D ON SUNDAY APRIL 19, 1795.

ALTHOUGH in the prosecution of this plan which I have undertaken I have already proceeded to the extent of six discourses, yet have I scarcely said a single word in vindication of the Church of England, as she stands in contradistinction to the Presbyterian. In my third Sermon indeed I acquainted you with the ground and origin of the distinction; which rested solely on a difference of opinion at the time of the Reformation with respect to Church-government. Our English Reformers, approving of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, and due subordination, adopted, or rather retain'd the Episcopal form of government; both as more consonant to the primitive model of Antiquity, and as more congenial to the spirit of our Civil Constitution.

stitution. Others who follow'd the opinions of the famous Calvin, and among them our Scottish Brethren, (Brethren now, but in those days most commonly Foes,) prefer'd a discipline of more equality, and less subordination. Among them therefore the Hierarchy was abolish'd, and the management of their Church being committed to Synods, or assemblies compos'd of Priests and Lay-Elders, both compriz'd under the denomination of Presbyters; thence arose the title of Presbyterians. In the same third Sermon you may farther remember, that after giving a general outline of the Church of England, I desir'd you particularly to notice, that what had been said was by way of relation only, not of vindication; this latter being reserv'd for a future discussion, after points of much greater consequence should have been previously consider'd.

These points have now been pretty fully consider'd; my three last discourses having been wholly dedicated to the defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, and the vindication of our Church for retaining in her service that grand bulwark of the Trinitarian doctrine against every subterfuge and quibble of Sophistry, the Athanasian Creed. And here it may be proper to explain more fully what I have

hitherto but barely hinted; which is, that this controversy respecting the Trinity has in fact nothing to do with the Presbyterians, as such. The Presbyterian Church, or as more commonly call'd, the Kirk of Scotland, is on this point no less orthodox than the Church of England. Calvin, who may be stil'd the Father of Presbyterianism, was a Trinitarian, as well as Luther, and the other Reformers; and so are all his genuine disciples to this hour. However they may differ from us respecting Church-government and discipline, and even in some less material points of doctrine; however opinions might vary concerning preconceiv'd forms of prayer, or Liturgies in general, and that of the Church of England in particular, with it's several ceremonies and offices: yet in the leading article of the Trinity, or the acknowledgment of three Persons in one God, the Faith of all Christians was alike. Papiſts, Presbyterians, Sectaries of every denomination, join'd in abhorrence of that pestilent heresy, which, as I have already observ'd, was first broach'd by Simon Magus, afterwards propagated by Arius, and lastly reviv'd by Socinus. A heresy, whose abettors, whatever they may think of themselves, have no more right to the appellation of Christians, than the followers of Mahomet or Confucius. They profess indeed to believe

lieve in the Christian Revelation, but torture that Revelation out of it's Christianity. And on this account it was, that with the consent of all parties the oppugners of the Trinity were excepted out of the Act of Toleration.

But in these latter days whereon our lot is fallen, a new and unheard of Phænomenon hath appear'd in the world. A set of men started up on the Continent, openly professing to explode Christianity, and in it's room to substitute what they are pleas'd to call Philosophy. Trusting solely to the strength of their own reason, their leading maxim of course is, to reject and disbelieve whatsoever is beyond the power of that reason to comprehend. On this principle it requires no great penetration to see what fate the doctrine of the Trinity must expect at their hands, even should they admit the truth of other parts of Revelation. Farther, declaring themselves champions of unqualified liberty, and observing the close alliance between Popery and Despotism; at the same time not distinguishing between the corruptions of Popery and the genuine purity of Christianity; they rashly concluded that Christianity itself, nay that all Religion must be incompatible with liberty, and that no man can be strictly and properly free, while subject to a su-

preme Governour of the world, or God. In France they have unhappily prevail'd so far, as to bring this wild and absurd theory to the test of experience. They have renounc'd all belief in a God, and discarded all religion; and on this account fancy themselves the only free people in the world. Hence the anarchy and misery which at this moment desolate that devoted land; whose liberty consists in an unbounded licence to rob and murder, and after all, to starve. Among ourselves, this bastard Philosophy seems to have stopt something short of this extreme. It's boasted leader and champion, whose despair of success here has driven him to the Continent of America, uniformly professes his belief in God, and his adherence to reveal'd Religion: but adopting in it's full force the maxim above-mention'd, of rejecting from his Creed whatever surpasses his comprehension; he is thence led to declare the most rancorous hostility against the doctrine of the Trinity; which he places at the head of the gross corruptions of Christianity. And his acknowledg'd abilities, together with the success, wherewith in consequence of those abilities, and of the most diligent and laborious investigation, he has been enabl'd to make some important discoveries in Natural and experimental Philosophy, have attach'd
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to him many admirers, whose blind zeal indiscriminately adopts even his wildest Reveries in divinity. Now these Priestleian Unitarians can by no means maintain a communion with the Church of England, which is Trinitarian throughout. What is the consequence? In the Metropolis, where their numbers are considerable, they have form'd themselves into separate societies, under the name of Unitarian congregations. But in the country, where their numbers are not considerable enough for that purpose, they have generally join'd themselves to some sect of Protestant Dissenters; whose members being unfetter'd from the restraints laid upon the Church of England by her Articles of Religion, are of course at full liberty to adopt whatever mode of faith their caprice or prejudice may suggest. And as the same restless spirit which disinclines men to believe what they can not comprehend, and to acknowledge any authority in matters of faith, naturally leads them to impatience under civil controul, and to a dislike of every constitution which falls short of their speculative ideas of unattainable perfection; hence it comes that Unitarians in religion are for the most part Republicans in Politics. Nor is it to be wonder'd at, that such as would degrade the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind into a mere Carpenter's son, should

should wish also to reduce the Kings and Nobles of the earth in the same manner, and to level all rank and power into an undistinguishable mass of imaginary equality.

From this statement of the case, thus fairly and fully represented, it is clear that the controversy between the Church of England and the Presbyterians is of trifling import in comparison of that between the Trinitarians and Unitarians. But unfortunately, whether from the long residence of the now departed Unitarian Philosopher in this neighbourhood, and his unwearied zeal and industry in propagating and disseminating his heretical tenets; or from what other cause it may have happen'd, which I presume not to fathom: yet the fact is, that the Presbyterians in this part of the kingdom are almost universally Unitarians. Were it otherwise, I should scarcely have thought it worth my while to undertake a formal defence and vindication of our Church against such objections as are strictly Presbyterian; most of which are mere trifling captious cavils scarce worth noticing, and some upon matters totally indifferent. But having already taken up so much of your time in combating the Unitarian Heresy, and their other objections being blended with that principal
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one against the Trinity ; I can not consider the execution of my design as compleat, without a cursory notice of whatsoever besides they have thought proper to allege against us. As to the original dispute respecting the mode of Church-government, I shall drop it entirely ; and for this reason, because every Sovereign State is possess'd of an indisputable right to chuse it's own. I look upon it as equally unjustifiable to decry Presbyterianism in Scotland, as Episcopacy in England: unless either can be prov'd repugnant to the word of God, which is not pretended. The assertion indeed which is stated to be the grand principle wherein all Dissenters agree, that Jesus Christ is the only Head of his Church, I shall think it necessary to examine at some length, as involving ambiguities, which taken in a wrong sense may lead to dangerous consequences. The several exceptions taken against Liturgies in general, and that of our own Church in particular, with it's various ceremonies and offices, I intend adverting to at such length as the importance of each may appear respectively to deserve. But the remaining parts of my plan being in a good measure distinct from all that has already preceded, and a kind of commencement of a new subject, it seems inexpedient to enter upon it in the middle of a discourse. Besides,
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I feel myself call'd upon to apologize to you for having extended my late discourses to a greater length than you had reason to expect from the early intimation I gave you to the contrary: for which I have only to plead in excuse the great importance of the subject, and the impropriety of interrupting the continuity of the argument. I hope to be able to correct this fault in future; since though much remains to be said, yet as the several topics will be distinct, and in a manner disunited from each other, and no one subject will require much time in the discussion; it will consequently be easy to circumscribe the limits of a Sermon, which may be concluded indifferently at almost any part. And the remainder of my time now I shall dedicate to an attempt to prepare your minds for the readier acceptance of the answers I shall have to make to our adversaries, by pointing out to you the general beauty and excellence of our admirable Liturgy.

In order to do this effectually, it would be necessary to take an exact and comprehensive survey of the whole; pointing out in order it's several beauties and excellencies, both in the substance, method, and language of it's prayers; it's judicious intermixture of petitions and supplications with
hymns

hymns of praise and thanksgiving, professions of faith, and exhortations to duty : together with it's inimitable selections of scriptural portions in the Lessons, Epistles, and Gospels. But this would require many more discourses than all the rest of my plan taken together ; nor would such an undertaking be so suitable to a sermon as to a treatise ; in which form it has already been executed in a masterly manner by several able and learned divines of our Church. And as one of those commentators has in a preface to his work given a most just character and encomium thereof ; and as his book, written at the distance of an hundred and twenty years, is now in few hands ; I shall without ceremony take the liberty of concluding this discourse in his words ; which are much more expressive than any that I could pretend to substitute in their room.

“ No Church was ever bless'd with so comprehensive, so exact, and so inoffensive a Liturgy, as our own. So judiciously is it contriv'd, that the wisest may exercise at once their knowledge and devotion ; so plain, that the most ignorant may pray with understanding : so full, that nothing is omitted which is fit to be ask'd in public ; so particular, that it compriseth most
“ things

“ things which we would ask in private ; yet so
“ short, as not to tire any that hath true devotion.
“ It’s doctrine is pure and primitive, it’s ceremo-
“ nies few and innocent ; it’s method exact and
“ natural ; it’s language significant and perspicu-
“ ous. Most of it’s words and phrases are taken
“ out of the holy Scriptures ; and the rest are the
“ expressions of the first and purest ages ; so that
“ whoever takes exception at these, must quarrel
“ with the language of the Holy Ghost, and fall
“ out with the Church in her greatest innocence.
“ The Scholar may therein discern close Logic,
“ pleasing Rhetoric, pure divinity, and the very
“ marrow of the ancient doctrine and discipline ;
“ yet all made so familiar, that the unlearned may
“ safely say Amen. It has obtain’d universal re-
“ putation ; is deservedly admir’d by the Eastern
“ Churches, and had in great esteem by the most
“ eminent Protestants beyond sea ; who are the
“ most impartial judges that can be desir’d. And
“ one of the most eminent and most learned of
“ these foreign divines, one not only unconnected
“ with our Church, but also under none, not even
“ the smallest obligation thereto, has given his de-
“ cursive opinion, that the English Liturgy comes
“ so near to the primitive pattern, that none of the
“ Reform’d Churches can compare with it.”

To

To this spirited and strictly just, as well as elegant Encomium, the pious author after a short interval, adds the following sentence and prayer; wherewith as he closes his preface, so will I close this discourse.

“Whoever desires no more than to worship God
 “with zeal and knowledge, spirit and truth, purity
 “and sincerity, may do it by these devout forms.
 “And to this end, may the God of peace give us all
 “meek hearts, quiet spirits, and devout affections;
 “and free us from all sloth and prejudice: that we
 “may have full churches, frequent prayers, and fervent charity: that uniting in our prayers here, we
 “may all join in his praises hereafter, for the sake of
 “Jesus Christ our Lord: to whom, with the Father,
 “and the Holy Ghost, three Persons and one God,
 “be all honour and glory for evermore.”

AMEN.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

PREACH'D ON SUNDAY APRIL 26, 1795.

BEING now to take into consideration the several exceptions made against our Church by those who dissent from us, and who allege these as the ground and justification of their separation from our communion, my design is first to examine each objection apart, in order to shew the futility of each; and secondly to prove that all of them together are far from sufficient to justify what I make no scruple of calling the heinous sin of Schism. Of these the first is necessary in order to vindicate my application of the Text; since otherwise our Church can not be truly characteriz'd as not having spot or wrinkle; and the second may serve to convince you of the folly and danger of that spirit of innovation, which would cast off an old, tried, serviceable

viceable garment, on account of a few suppos'd spots or wrinkles, and those scarcely if at all perceptible; and adopt in it's room a flimsy piece of modern texture, without either strength, beauty, or conveniency. But there remains still in the way an obstacle, which must be previously remov'd. For before entering upon the several specific objections, I must beg leave to examine the strength and solidity of that fundamental basis which supports the whole fabric. This I shall now give you in their own words; and a thorough discussion of this single point will furnish ample matter for the present discourse.

The grand principle then of Dissenters, in which we are told they all agree, is stated to be this: that Jesus Christ is the only Head of his Church; and that no earthly power has a right to prescribe what his disciples are to believe; since He has taught us to call no man upon earth Master, with respect to religious matters; because One is our Master, even Christ. Now as this sentence is somewhat perplex'd, I shall take the liberty to analyse it, and give you a view of it's several component parts, or members. It contains then first the main proposition, or Axiom, that Jesus Christ is the only Head of his Church. Secondly, an
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inference, or Corollary, drawn from thence ; which is, that no earthly power has a right to prescribe to the disciples of Christ what they are to believe. Lastly, the scriptural proof whereon the proposition is founded ; namely, that Christ has taught us to call no man upon earth Master, with respect to religious matters, by having told us that One is our Master, even Christ. Now in the examination of this matter it seems necessary to invert the order by beginning with the last part ; since if the Scripture proof be inadequate to the purpose for which it is alleg'd, the whole must fall to the ground. My present design then is, first to explain the passage of Scripture whereto they allude ; secondly, to shew in what sense the Axiom is true, and what dangers as well as absurdities naturally flow from a sinister acceptation of it ; and lastly, to examine the Corollary, or consequence, here drawn from it.

First then for the scriptural proof. The Text alluded to is the tenth verse of the twenty third chapter of Saint Matthew, where it is thus written : Neither be ye called Masters ; for One is your Master, even Christ. For the clear understanding of this Text, it will be necessary to take in the whole scope of the context, from the beginning

ning of the Chapter. We find in the first verse that it is Jesus who speaks; and that his discourse is address'd both to his own disciples, and to the multitude. In the conclusion of the preceding Chapter, Jesus having first silenc'd the Sadducees, and after them the Pharisees, in such sort that, as the Evangelist informs us, no man was able to answer Him, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions; takes occasion on their departure to caution his hearers concerning them. And it is very observable, that He begins with a direct and implicit avowal of their lawful authority in the Jewish Church: The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do: that is, obey their commands in all things agreeable to the divine Law given by God to Moses; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not. And such is the unhappy frailty of human nature, that it would be no unbecoming humility in the very best of Christian Ministers to urge a similar caution respecting ourselves: follow our precepts rather than our examples; for alas! but too often we say, and do not. Our Saviour then proceeds to notice particularly the several Pharisaical practices which He would have his followers eschew; and first He marks that ostentatious

vanity for which they were above all other men remarkable. All their works, says Christ, they do to be seen of men. They love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets: and to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi. Now these several charges, together with that other of making broad their Phylacteries, and enlarging the borders of their garments, have a reference to Jewish customs of those days, familiar to the audience to whom Christ spoke; but a full explanation whereof would lead me too far from the main subject. I shall only observe that the term Rabbi, which is equivalent to Master, was a title much affected by the learned teachers of the Jews; and that the Heads or Principals of what they call'd the schools of the Prophets were particularly distinguish'd by the appellation of Fathers. In allusion hereto we must interpret the three following verses. But be not ye call'd Rabbi; for One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your Father upon the earth; for One is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called Masters; for One is your Master even Christ. That these words can not be understood strictly, is manifest from two considerations. For first, it is well known that in those times no such a description
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of persons existed, as what are now hired or menial Servants; but all work was perform'd by actual Slaves; who were as much the property of their respective owners or proprietors, as are our horses or cattle. If then Christ's prohibition to call any man Master had been taken strictly, it must have been consider'd as implying an immediate emancipation of all slaves on their conversion to Christianity. But that no such thing was in fact design'd is plain from Saint Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, where in the seventh Chapter he says, Let every man abide in the same Calling, or condition, wherein he was called; and adds, Art thou called, or converted, being a servant, or slave? care not for it: be contented in that state; nor imagine that thy admission into Christianity is to discharge thee from thy servitude. Nay the same Apostle's Letter to Philemon is nothing but a request that he would forgive and receive a runaway slave nam'd Onesimus; who although a Christian, and beloved brother, and Minister unto Paul in the bonds of the Gospel, was not yet on the score of all this merit releas'd from his obligation to his master. But secondly Christ adds, Call no man your Father upon the earth; for One is your Father which is in heaven. Can this injunction be taken strictly? shall we suppose the blessed Jesus meant to destroy

the parental tye? is it Antichristian for a child to use the endearing name of Father? Absurd, and even ridiculous! Nay farther, it is not forbidden us to apply the term Father in a spiritual sense. Saint Paul having call'd the Corinthians his beloved sons, immediately adds, For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many Fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel: meaning, that by his ministry alone they were originally converted to Christianity. Even the Dissenters themselves scruple not to appeal to the antient ecclesiastical writers under the appellation of the Fathers: however their squeamish consciences may be offended at our addressing the Bishops of our Church by the style of Right Reverend Fathers in God. The result of the whole is, that the words we have been considering relate particularly to that audience to whom Christ address'd them, and to customs then and there subsisting: and as far as they concern us imply no more than an admonition to us not to usurp a dominion over your Faith; but to exhort you in Saint Paul's words to the Corinthians, Be Ye followers of Us, even as we also are of Christ.

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This passage then of Scripture being thus upon examination found to be inadequate to the proof of the assertion in behalf whereof it is so confidently alleg'd, I now proceed to consider the assertion itself. Jesus Christ is the only Head of his Church. That Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, is true in every possible sense. He is God, over All. He is the sole founder of Christianity: the sole author of our salvation. In consequence of his voluntary humiliation, He is likewise invested by the Father with that Mediatorial kingdom which is to continue till the final consummation of the Universe; when according to Saint Paul, the Son also Himself shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be All in All. Then only shall Christ's Mediatorial kingdom cease, when All being subdued thereto, nothing farther remains whereupon it can be exercis'd. In all these respects does every Christian unequivocally acknowledge Christ to be the Head, and only Head of the Church. But here the equivocation lies in the little word--*Only*. That there neither is, nor can be, any authority paramount to that of Christ, we readily allow; but they would fain stretch the signification of the word *Only* into a denial of the lawfulness of any subordinate authority. The absurdity of this notion scarcely needs to be pointed

out. Our Civil Constitution acknowledges but one supreme head in the King; but is this any argument against the delegated power of inferior Magistracies? The Christian Church is the aggregate body of Christian people: the Church of England is the aggregate body of those Christian people who assent to her doctrine and discipline. Christ, the supreme Head, is invisible: while on earth, He left us general rules for our faith and practice, which still remain in their full force; but He left us no precise or determinate directions for the government of his Church, consider'd as a visible Body. In order to govern his Church immediately and personally, He must either have continued to reside upon earth, or have preserv'd a continued miraculous interposition and communication from heaven. God is universal Sovereign: yet has every nation a sovereign power residing somewhere in it's constitution, whether that constitution be Monarchical, Aristocratical, Democratical, or like our own, a happy mixture of all; and without such a Sovereignty, all would be Anarchy.

These few observations, while they shew you the absurdities that flow from the perverse misapplication of a principle in itself strictly true, may at the same time convey some idea of the dangers that
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may from thence consequentially arise. But farther to illustrate and confirm this last idea, of the danger, I mean, as well as the absurdity ; permit me to remind you of what actually came to pass in this very kingdom, within the lapse of a Century and an half. In those dreadful times which immediately preceded and follow'd the execrable, and 'till of late unparallel'd murder of Charles the first ; times, which some factious and turbulent spirits of these days, not content with extolling, would gladly renew : when Church and State, which always stand or fall together, lay prostrate in the dust ; while Anarchy, conducted by Hypocrisy, rode triumphant over their ruins : among the innumerable sects and heresies which Hell spawn'd out on this distracted land, there started up a set of Fanatics, who assum'd to themselves the title of Fifth-monarchy men. Alluding to the four great Monarchies that according to the prophetic predictions have successively rul'd over the world ; and recurring to a prophecy in the Revelations of Saint John, imperfectly understood, respecting a Millennium, or reign of Christ with his Saints upon earth, for a thousand years previous to the final consummation of all things ; on these grounds they affected to maintain that this fifth monarchy, or reign of Christ, was already commenc'd ; and

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Jesus being the Only King, all earthly authority was of course superseded and utterly abolish'd. The consequences of this doctrine were among the most dreadful of those which stain that gloomy and inauspicious page of British history: and I shall leave it to your own imaginations to pourtray the scenes that would now ensue, and the triumphs of folly and fanaticism over sense and loyalty, if, from the sinister acceptance of God's being sole King and Judge, must follow the abolition of all earthly Government and Judicature; and your obedience to King Jesus overturn your allegiance to King George.

But let me not be misunderstood as though I meant to insinuate, that the Separatists from our communion generally lean towards the pernicious doctrines which I have been reprobating: though there be certainly something suspicious in their stating this principle of Christ's being the only Head of his Church as a kind of center of union to all Dissenters; whereas in fact, when restricted within it's proper sense, and guarded from perverse misapplications, it is equally a center of union to all christians of every denomination. The Corollary or conclusion which they draw from this principle is, that no earthly power has a right to prescribe what
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the disciples of Christ are to believe. This I come now thirdly and lastly to consider.

The very mention of prescription in matters of Faith is an absurdity. Belief is the child of persuasion, not of Authority. Persecution has made many an hypocrite, but never a true believer. But however incompetent human authority be for the propagation of Faith, yet must divine authority be ever acknowledg'd as it's legitimate source. When Man speaks, we are at liberty to withhold our assent, 'till proof generates conviction. When God speaks, all the proof requisite is merely of the fact, that it is God who speaks ; and implicit belief must instantaneously follow. Now all who call themselves christians agree in receiving the Holy Scriptures as the undoubted word of God ; and all are consequently under the same obligation to believe and obey them. If then it can be made appear that the Church of England does in any one single instance prescribe the belief of any article which is not contain'd in Scripture, nor may be prov'd thereby ; come out of her ; discard her authority ; renounce her communion. But 'till this can be done, and all the acuteness, all the industry, all the malice of her ablest, as well as most determin'd adversaries have never yet been able to do it ;

it ; to what purpose all this renunciation of human authority in matters of Religion? this raising such a dust about nothing, merely to blind our eyes.

Thus much I have thought necessary in order to put you upon your guard against the sly and insidious insinuations that lurk conceal'd under the mask of truth in the assertion I have been considering. The assertion itself is strictly true. Jesus Christ is the only Head of his Church ; nor has any earthly power a right to prescribe what Christians are to believe. But from the mode of urging this, and from the stating it so particularly as the grand principle wherein all Dissenters agree, would not any unprejudic'd stranger, ignorant of the differences between us, be naturally induc'd to suppose, that this said agreement was peculiar to the Dissenters exclusively? that the Church of England disavow'd this grand principle? that by her entitling the King her supreme head, she renounces the Headship of Christ? that she enforces articles on your Faith by the mere dint of human authority, utterly unsupported by the word of God in Scripture? This is in fact what they wish you to believe, though they dare not openly and unequivocally avow it. And this covert mode of attack appear'd to me of consequence sufficient to demand

demand singly one entire discourse. Their open and avow'd objections, together with what I have farther to offer upon the subject, I shall be able to comprize in two more Sermons; and having detain'd you long enough at present, shall now dismiss you with the usual conclusion; ascribing all honour and glory, praise, might, majesty, and dominion to the ever-blessed and undivided Trinity in Unity, for ever and ever.

AMEN.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

PREACH'D ON SUNDAY MAY 10, 1795.

At that period of time when England, at length happily emancipated from the spiritual tyranny of Rome, was to establish a National Church for herself, it could not be expected in the nature of things that all should be uniformly of one mind respecting the model and form whereon that Church should be constituted. The Maxim which our Reformers so prudently adopted, of departing from the Church of Rome no farther than she had departed from the Church of Christ, was by no means agreeable to some hot headed zealots, who were for reprobating and discarding indiscriminately whatsoever had been adopted by Papal Rome, however primitive and orthodox; all which the cant of fanaticism affected to abominate, as polluted by the infectious touch of the scarlet whore of Babylon.

bylon. Because the Bishop or Pope of Rome had usurp'd and exercis'd an undue dominion, therefore all Church government by Bishops was Popish and Antichristian: because the Church of Rome had invented and introduced many ceremonies that encourag'd superstition, and led to idolatry, therefore all ceremonies were superstitious, Popish, and idolatrous: because Papal Rome used a Liturgy, all Liturgies were Popish: because Rome encourag'd pageantry, they were for banishing decency. Hence originated the petulant cavils rais'd against praying by precompos'd forms, or a Liturgy; against the use of the Surplice, which though white, was branded as a rag of that same scarlet whore; against the innocent, however significant ceremonies of the cross in baptism, and the ring in marriage; and against the humble and reverential posture of kneeling at the holy communion. But these ridiculous and trifling objections seem at present to be nearly worn out: the expediency of precompos'd forms is pretty generally acknowledg'd by the wisest and best of the Presbyterians themselves, and rejected only by the most illiterate bigots of that sect: and it is candidly own'd, that the old Puritans objected not so much to the ceremonies themselves, as to the authority which impos'd them. And this is one striking instance among many, of the perverse mis-

misapplication of the principle consider'd in my last discourse, of Christ being the only Head of the Church. All these I shall pass over; as well as what relates merely to Church government, for the reason already assign'd; that every National Church has an indefeasible right to model it's own, provided there be nothing therein repugnant to the word of God. Under this head I comprize the exception taken against us, on account of our withholding from Christian people the power of choosing their own Ministers. In the opinion of our Reformers the inconveniences of that practice were imagin'd far to over-balance it's conveniences: the Founders of the Scottish Church, with the generality of our Sectaries, thought otherwise: nor has either party any right to find fault with the other on this point. On the propriety of requiring a subscription to Articles from the Clergy, I shall only observe, that every Society has an undoubted right to prescribe rules and orders to all whom it admits to a ministration of it's Offices, and a participation of it's emoluments. And I hesitate not to affirm, in reply to a most base insinuation, that our declaration of unfeigned assent and consent to every thing contain'd in, and prescrib'd by the book of Common Prayer, has not the most distant tendency to injure either delicacy of conscience, or the strictest regard

gard to truth. Dissenters may and do object: We dissent not, but approve.

Having thus briefly notic'd general charges, I now proceed to vindicate those particular offices of our Liturgy which are stated by the Dissenters as most peculiarly offensive to them, and these are five; namely, those of Ordination, and Confirmation, which are restricted to the Bishop; and those of Infant-baptism, Visitation of the sick, and Burial of the dead, which are ordinary ministrations of every Parish Priest. To the two first it is but natural to expect objections, were it only on account of the hands by which they are confer'd; since to a staunch Presbyterian, Prelacy is little less obnoxious than Popery. To begin then with the Ordination service, wherein they confine their accusations principally to one part, which is this: the Bishop says, Receive the Holy Ghost. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. On this form they thus insidiously and indecently comment. We can not find in the New Testament, say they sneeringly, that Bishops in the present day possess the power of forgiving sins; much less of communicating that power to others. Witty and smart this; and what may pass upon such as can not distinguish

tinguish between ridicule and argument. But let them turn to the sixteenth chapter of Saint Matthew, where at the nineteenth verse Christ tells Saint Peter, I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Next, to shew that these words are not to be restricted to Saint Peter exclusively, let them turn to the eighteenth chapter of the same Gospel, where at the eighteenth verse Christ addressing Himself to all the Apostles, uses nearly the same words: Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Once more, let me refer them to the twentieth chapter of Saint John's Gospel; where the holy Evangelist having recorded an appearance of Christ to his disciples after his resurrection, has the following very remarkable passage. Then said Jesus unto them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained. Here we have the very form of words used by Christ Jesus, the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, in ordaining

daining his disciples to their Apostolical Priesthood. And this form our Church, in reverential imitation of her divine Founder, still retains. But common sense, if accompanied by the smallest degree of candour, cannot but suggest one very material distinction. The blessed Jesus had promis'd to send the Comforter, that Holy Spirit which proceedeth from the Father and the Son. He breathed on them, and the promise was accomplish'd. The words then which as utter'd by Christ were authoritative, when pronounc'd by man are but supplicatory. And that our Church adopts them in that sense is manifest from the whole tenor of the Ordination service itself. The Bishop in his previous exhortation enjoins the candidates for Priesthood to pray continually to God the Father, by the Mediation of the only Saviour Jesus Christ, for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost. The hymns us'd on that occasion are solemn invocations of the Holy Ghost. Christ made use of no such invocations: He commanded, and it stood fast. Then for what is call'd the power of the Keys, namely, remitting or retaining of sins; although the learned differ considerably with respect to it's full latitude, yet is it most usually restricted to spiritual censures and absolutions. And the

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Church may be safely justified for retaining an expression thrice repeated by Christ Himself, even though the full extent and precise import of that expression be granted to be but imperfectly understood.

This unreasonable cavil against a part of our Ordination service being thus at some length obviated, I come next to their equally unreasonable cavils at the rite of Confirmation, that other Episcopal function. Here they affect to be angry, because the Bishop in his address to God solemnly declares that God has vouchsaf'd to regenerate these his servants by water and the Holy Ghost. Were this office to be us'd to the unbaptiz'd, the objection would be just; but whoever understands the nature of the Sacrament of Baptism will plainly see, that these words amount to no more than a grateful acknowledgment that God hath already admitted these his servants into the covenant of grace by the laver of regeneration in Baptism. But farther, the Bishop by laying on of hands, certifies each particular person of God's favour and gracious goodness towards him: though he can not possibly tell that all whom he thus certifies are regenerated and true Christians. Here is a striking instance of that equivocal ambiguity so frequently and so shamelessly employ'd for the abuse of our Church, and her ordinances.

nances. The Bishop does know that each person on whom he thus lays his hand is a Christian, and regenerate by Baptism, whereby he became a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. But here they artfully foist in a different acceptation of the words; meaning by regenerated and true Christians, such as by the constant practice of goodness have uniformly continued in that state of grace to which they were admitted by Baptism. Now to which of the candidates for Confirmation this description may be competent, we grant the Bishop can not possibly know; and that for this plain reason, because he is not infallible. Here then again a small mixture of candour with common sense will serve for the vindication of this rite; whereby the Bishop only certifies the continuance of that grace bestow'd in Baptism on such as fulfil the conditions in that very Baptism stipulated; and which, as our Catechism teaches, when they come to age themselves are bound to perform.

In hopes that what I have now advanc'd in justification of the offices of our Church respecting these two Episcopal functions of Ordination and Confirmation may suffice for the satisfaction of the members of our own communion, and enable them to

view with merited contempt the frivolous and cap-
tious exceptions of gainfayers ; I here dismiss the
topic ; and proceed to vindicate those other ser-
vices which appertain to our daily ministration as
Parish Priests, from the equally trifling and equally
malicious objections of our adversaries. Now
among these offices there are three which are
mark'd as being peculiarly objectionable, namely,
the respective forms of administering Baptism, of
visiting the sick, and of burying the dead. To be-
gin then with the first of these, the administration
of Baptism. Now on this subject I mean not to
trespass on your time and abuse your patience by
entering on a formal confutation of the Quakers
on the one hand, or of the Anabaptists on the other.
The first of these, under the pretence of rejecting
what they chuse to call carnal ordinances, admit of
neither Priesthood, Service, nor even Sacra-
ments ; and enthusiastically dreaming of a fancied
inspiration which they denominate inward light,
refer every thing thereto, in preference to the writ-
ten word of God in Scripture ; which they affect
to call the dead letter. Now in opposition to En-
thusiasm, which is a species of madness, it is vain to
employ the arms of reason : and though there may
be, and I doubt not are, very sensible individuals,
whom the prejudices of education and habit retain
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in that society ; yet there seems little danger of any man being induc'd to desert the national Church for it's sake ; unless on some motives of temporal interest, or worldly policy. Nor is much more to be apprehended from the Anabaptists ; who are advocates for the sacrament of Baptism, but deny it to Infants ; in direct opposition to the command of Christ, as well as to the practice of the first and purest ages of Christianity.

Leaving then the Quaker and the Anabaptist to their several absurdities, I shall here confine myself to the exceptions taken by the Presbyterians against the form prescrib'd by the Church of England for the administration of this Sacrament of Baptism ; and these are two. The first is, that we ask the Infant questions, which it can neither understand nor answer. Here is a false statement of the fact. We ask nothing of the Infant. But Baptism being a solemn initiation into the new covenant of grace, and the nature of a covenant implying reciprocal conditions, the Church dares not admit into that covenant an Infant conceived and born in sin, without exacting the necessary stipulations on the Infant's part ; the nature of which stipulations we know the Infant can not understand, while an Infant ; and therefore charge the sponsors to take

care that he be properly instructed therein, as soon as his years will permit : and it is to those sponsors we put the questions, which they are to answer in the name and on the behalf of the Infant, previous to his admission into the sacramental covenant of Baptism. This first cavil then would come with more propriety from the Anabaptists, who withholding the participation of this sacrament from Infants, allow it only to Adults, or those of full age to answer for themselves.

The other objection must be more fully considered ; not only as being much more specious and plausible, but as also coinciding with the prejudices of too many of our own communion, and particularly among the lower ranks of life. It is thus stated. Our Church refuses to receive those as sponsors for the religious education of their own children, whom the God of nature has constituted such ; and appoints others, to whom God has not delegated this important and solemn trust. Now here again is an egregious fallacy and misrepresentation ; for it is insinuated as though the Church of England would fain deprive parents of the care of their own children, so far at least as respects religious education ; and would commit that most sacred trust to strangers. Whereas the real truth is no more than this :

this : the Church very properly considers all parents as already engag'd by the strictest ties both of nature and religion to take care of the education of their own children. But notwithstanding these obligations, parents may be, and too often in fact are negligent or incapable of performing their duty : many desert their families ; many are called off by death. For all these emergencies the Church would willingly make a provision, by appointing others upon whom that charge might devolve in case of the neglect, incapacity, desertion, or death of the parents. And farther, to insure, as far as possible, a proper choice of persons for this momentous trust, she ordains, that no person be admitted Godfather or Godmother, before the said person so undertaking hath received the holy communion. But alas ! this wise and salutary provision of the Church is in a great measure defeated by two circumstances. One is, that the common law of the land invests no controuling power in sponsors ; so that the utmost they can do is no more than to advise and remonstrate : and the other is, the laxity at least, if not impiety of the times ; owing to which, the standing to a child, as it is call'd, or undertaking the office of a sponsor, is now consider'd as a mere piece of ceremony ; and instead of implying any obligation of duty, only conferring

ring a kind of title to a participation of the christening entertainment. Here then however we may lament the decay of piety among us, and the consequent perversion of a most sacred ordinance, yet can not the least degree of blame attach to our Church; which on the contrary is highly praiseworthy for the very solicitous care she has in this instance express'd for the religious education of her members.

There remain yet to be consider'd the cavils of Dissenters against some parts of our Visitation and Funeral services, which I shall reserve for my next, and that my concluding discourse on this subject.

Now, to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, for ever, and ever.

AMEN.

SERMON

SERMON X.

PREACH'D ON SUNDAY MAY 17, 1795.

HAVING in my last discourse obviated the cavils rais'd by the Dissenters against the several forms prescrib'd by our Church for Ordination, Confirmation, and Baptism; I now proceed to those against our respective offices for visiting the sick, and burying the dead. In the first of these, the form of Absolution is particularly censur'd. The Priest, say they, after the sick person has professed his faith and repentance, whether that profession be sincere or not, is directed to say, By the authority committed to me I absolve thee from all thy sins. And hereon it is observ'd, that neither does the Priest possess the power of knowing mens hearts, nor is any such authority committed to him
from

from above. In answer hereto I beg leave to submit to you the four following remarks. First then I observe that this whole office is entirely discretionary. When our liturgy was first compil'd, such was the low state of learning, that but few Ministers could be found who were deem'd capable of properly instructing the people. Hence the distinction in those days between Preachers, who were specially licenc'd to preach; and other Ministers, for whose use the Homilies were compos'd and set forth. Now the Canon says expressly, that when a Minister is call'd upon to visit the sick, he shall use the Visitation service, if he be no Preacher; but if he be a Preacher, then shall he proceed as he shall think most needful and convenient. Now in these days, when learning is so much more generally diffus'd, this distinction no longer exists; every Minister of the Church of England being a Preacher; and as such enjoying a discretionary power respecting the use of this service. Secondly, the words, I absolve thee, however absolute they may seem, are nevertheless clearly conditional, on the proviso that the sinners repentance be sincere; which though unknown to the Priest, is known to God; who will accordingly either ratify the Absolution, or not. But thirdly, that the Church hereby meant no more than a remission of ecclesiastical censures,

censures, and insuring to the sick penitent the privileges of church communion, will be little doubted by any, who will candidly examine the prayer immediately following this absolution. Open thine eye of mercy upon this thy servant, who most earnestly desireth pardon and forgiveness. Surely he can not think himself in full possession of that for which he thus importunately renews his supplication. Again; Preserve and continue this sick member in the unity of the Church. The tenor of this petition not obscurely points out the meaning of the foregoing Absolution. Fourthly and lastly, in consideration of the great change of manners that has prevail'd since the compilement of our Liturgy, I am much mistaken if the generality of the Clergy do not avail themselves of the discretionary power above mention'd: so that this formidable objection is level'd after all against what may be consider'd as an obsolete Statute, remaining indeed in the book unrepeal'd, but never put in force.

I come now finally to our Funeral Service; which the Dissenters profess to admire greatly upon the whole, but object warmly to some parts of it; because they are read over all characters, and are applicable only to real Christians. In answer hereunto it has been urg'd by Ritualists, that the compilers

pillers of our Liturgy, presuming upon a due exercise of discipline, never suppos'd that any would be offer'd to christian burial, who had not led christian lives. But this apology I candidly own appears to me little satisfactory. From the consideration of those descriptions of persons to whom the Church denies christian burial may, I think, be collected her true sentiments concerning all others to whom she allows that burial. She denies it to three descriptions ; the unbaptiz'd, excommunicate, and self-murderers. Of these the first have never been admitted into the Church ; the second have been authoritatively expell'd out of it ; and the third have died in the actual commission of a sin, which precludes all possibility of an after-repentance. These three alone excepted, she enjoins the burial service to be perform'd for all others indiscriminately. Hence I infer, that the Church with equal prudence and charity meant to discountenance all private judgment ; that she looks upon all as true Christians, who having been once admitted into the covenant of grace by Baptism, have never by their gross enormities incur'd her public censure ; and that she presumes not to arraign the validity and efficacy of a death-bed repentance, which even the most notorious sinner may have exercis'd, for ought we can say to the contrary : and whose
sincerity

sincerity can be known only to that omniscient Being to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid. Viewing then the sentiments of our Church in this just light, it will not be found very difficult satisfactorily to vindicate the condemn'd passages. They are principally three: one in the form us'd by us on committing the body to the ground; and one in each of the two concluding prayers. These I shall consider in their order.

First then, on the body being laid in the grave, we say, Forasmuch as it hath pleased God of his great mercy to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother, or sister, here departed. Upon this we are told, that the expression of God in mercy taking a soul to Himself, can imply nothing less than the eternal salvation of that soul; consequently that we affirm all to be saved, over whose remains we pronounce these words. Had any such inference been intended, an alteration should surely have been made for the sake of consistency in what follows; and instead of, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, should have been substituted, Blessed are the dead to whom the Church

Church of England is pleas'd to vouchsafe christian burial. But farther, we commit the body to the ground in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life. True: we express our faith and hope of a general resurrection at the last day, through our Lord Jesus Christ; but we presume not to pronounce concerning the individual body now lying before us, whether it shall rise to eternal happiness, or to eternal misery. One of the two alternatives we know to be certain; but which of the two must be left to the final sentence of the great Judge, from whose righteous determination there can be no appeal. Our form then, when interpreted by candour, amounts to no more than this: Whereas it hath seemed good to the God of all mercy to summon out of this world the soul of this our late Relative; we the survivors do here carefully deposit the body in the bosom of it's parent earth; in full confidence, grounded on the declarations of Jesus Christ, that it shall one day be raised again; and reunited to the same soul which has lately forsaken it, shall therewith partake of the endless bliss, or endless torment, reserv'd for it in the world to come.

Secondly, in the first of the two concluding prayers is this expression. We give Thee hearty thanks,

thanks, for that it hath pleased Thee to deliver this]
our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world.
This, say they, you read over those who are prob-
ably gone to a worse place. Possibly they are;
nay, and I grant, according to the best of our
judgments, probably too: but who made us jud-
ges in these cases? It may suit Puritanical pride
to pronounce dogmatically on the future condition
of individuals: we rest contented with setting in
array the terrors of the Lord to deter sinners in
this life; but when once the spirit is departed,
true christian humility will beware of all peremp-
tory decisions. And whereas the weakness of hu-
manity can not but revolt at the loss of those who
were near and dear to us, the Church in the true
spirit of religion and piety offers a corrective to
this weakness, by inculcating not only resignation,
but even thankfulness. The Lord gave, and the
Lord hath taken away; both are alike his doing,
and all his ways are mercy and goodness: blessed
be the Name of the Lord.

Thirdly, in the second and last prayer immedi-
ately preceding the final blessing, and which is of-
fer'd up to God in behalf of the surviving attend-
ants on the deceas'd, is this petition. We meekly
beseech Thee, O Father, to raise us from the death

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of

of sin unto the life of righteousness; that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in Him, that is in Christ; as our hope is this our brother doth. Here again is Puritanic zeal rous'd into a flame. What? do you profess before God that you hope this your brother rests in Christ, when you must believe that he died in his sins, and is not gone to Christ? And why, let me ask in my turn, why am I bound to believe this? did I see or hear the deceas'd vomit forth his last breath in blasphemies? am I conscious to what pass'd between his soul and God in his parting moments? probably his life had been wicked; I suspect as much: possibly I know it; and of course entertain strong doubts and fears as to his final doom; but shall these doubts and fears absolutely preclude every ray of hope? must I presumptuously take upon me to declare his soul irrevocably damn'd to all eternity? God of his infinite mercy forbid! forbid it piety! forbid it charity! Nor again do we pray that we may rest in Christ in the same manner as our deceas'd brother doth. Absurd in the highest degree for any man to stake his own salvation on that of another. Our prayer is positive, that after our departure out of this life we may rest in Christ; to which we add, not, as this our brother doth, but, as our hope is this our brother doth.

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We affirm nothing concerning the deceas'd, but only express a hope; however faint and probably groundless that hope may be. And the hypocritical affectation of sanctity that reprobates this, can not but on the same ground reprobate even our blessed Saviour Himself, for compassionately weeping over that Jerusalem, which after having killed the Prophets, and stoned them which were sent unto her, would very shortly proceed, as He certainly foreknew, to fill up the full measure of her iniquities by crucifying Himself, the Lord of Life.

You are now, my beloved brethren, in possession of my sentiments respecting such objections as have come to my knowledge, against the several offices us'd in our Church. There may be others; but I am justified in considering these as the principal, since these they professedly allege as grounds of their dissent. And from the observations, however imperfect, which I have made upon them, I trust they will appear in your eyes as they do in mine; nothing more than the peevish petulant cavils of discontented men, impatient of controul, restless under authority, and dissatisfied with whatever accords not minutely with their own idle fancies, opinions, and prejudices. But were their objections of ten times more importance than they in

fact possess, still would they be far from sufficient to vindicate them from the heavy charge of unnecessary, and therefore sinful, Schism. Nothing can justify a breach of christian union and communion, but the circumstance of a Church requiring such terms of communion as are in opposition to the commands of God, and the doctrines of the Gospel. On this circumstance alone do Protestants justify their separation from the Church of Rome. Among her terms of communion is idolatry, which is expressly forbidden by God; and therefore we can not in conscience comply. But no such unlawful terms are prescrib'd by our Church. The Unitarian indeed, who rejects the doctrine of the Trinity, can not consistently hold communion with that Church which is built upon the basis of the Trinity. But the Presbyterian, merely as such, quarrels at things in themselves indifferent; dislikes this and that, which he would have mended according to his own model; but after all his utmost efforts can not charge us with any repugnancy to Scripture. And although their separation, being protected by the act of Toleration, thenceforwards ceases to be an offence against the laws of the land; yet how far it continues to be an offence against the divine law of charity and love, is a serious matter of consideration for themselves.

selves. Be that as it may; we are innocent: let them look to it.

For my own part, the more minutely and the more impartially I examine into the grounds and motives of separation alleg'd by the several sects of Protestant Dissenters, still the more reasons do I discover for thankfulness to God, for that he hath been graciously pleased to call me to a ministration in the Church of England: still do I see in a stronger light the propriety of applying to that Church those words of the Apostle which I have prefix'd as a Text to this series of discourses. A strict application of the words can indeed be alone competent to the Church triumphant in heaven, compos'd of God's Elect, the spirits of just men made perfect. The Church militant here in earth, consisting of frail mortals, must in some degree partake of human infirmity. To affirm that our Liturgy is absolutely faultless, would be to claim the gift of inspiration to it's compilers. Learned and pious they all were; many of them were Martyrs and Confessors: but we pretend not to say they were inspir'd, nor of consequence could they be infallible. But thus much we may safely and confidently assert, that a more perfect and faultless work never issued from the pens of uninspir'd men

men. And should ever a review of it be thought expedient, little more will be found necessary than an accommodation of some few parts, and those chiefly among the Rubrics, to the alter'd manners of the times. And such a review might not improbably have taken place before now, had it not been for the unreasonable cavils of the Dissenters; whose real aims are easily discoverable through the flimsy veil wherewith they affect to cover them. Against these both Church and State can never be too cautiously guarded: and when a fortress is closely begirt and vigorously attack'd by an inveterate and indefatigable foe, an attention to the meanest and apparently most insignificant outwork becomes a matter of importance. Shall we give place then by subjection? No; not for an hour.

I am not sanguine enough to entertain a hope that any thing I have advanc'd in these discourses would reconcile a single Dissenter to the Church, even on the supposition that any of that description had made a part of my audience, and favour'd me with the same attention which I have experienc'd from You. I well know the rooted obstinacy of their prejudices, imbib'd in earliest infancy, and confirm'd by education and habit. And God forbid that I should judge them: to our common
Master

Master they must stand or fall. It is for the sake of my own flock solely that I have engag'd in this tedious undertaking, which I have now at last brought to a conclusion; and whose merit, if any be allow'd it, belongs more to the design than to the execution. It has been my aim to guard you against the wily arts, and furnish you with answers to the captious cavils of such as would fain seduce you from the plain and safe road of truth, into the crooked by-paths of error, which lead to destruction; and who for that purpose cease not continually to revile and malign the establish'd Church. Of that Church, whereof we are happily members, I have endeavour'd to impress you with that high opinion, which is to me the result of conviction; and to justify the application I have made to it of the words of the Text: since it can fairly claim the merit, beyond any other establishment of Christianity, and with the exceptions only of mere human infirmity, of being

A glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing!

And may the Almighty ever preserve, protect, and bless it! may He prosper its supreme head upon earth, our gracious Sovereign; granting him
a long

a long and happy life, and compleat victory over all his enemies both foreign and domestic; who are also the decided enemies of Order, of virtue, and of Religion! And may He vouchsafe to us his humble servants grace so to faithfully serve, honour, and obey Him here, that hereafter we may finally obtain everlasting life; and for ever join the heavenly choir of Saints and Angels in unceasing Hallelujahs to the adorable Trinity in Unity. *Amen.*



FINIS.

